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FRIEND.

BY SIANU.

' . . . hanged by the neck until you are dead.' The Chinese interpreter finished translating the sentence into the native speech of the prisoner in the dock, who smiled in acknowledgment and bowed to the Judge. Two warders stepped forward and led Lee Song to the cells : he had expected the sentence, knowing that the murder he had committed warranted the death penalty. Nevertheless, he considered it a justifiable murder, he could hardly have done otherwise than kill the man who had threatened him and his family with dishonour : no self-respecting Chinaman would have hesitated. Of course it was bad luck, being caught, but the white policemen in Malaya were so clever, especially the detectives—*mata mata glap*—the hidden eyes of the law. Lee Song had nothing but admiration for the way the net had been drawn closer and closer until they arrested him.

At the trial, his guild had seen to it that he was defended by the ablest lawyers, but all to no purpose, he must now bow to fate and go to his death bravely—a credit to the Chinese race. He was told that three weeks would elapse before the sentence was carried out, and that in the meantime he could see members of his family if he so wished. He thanked the officials, gave no trouble to those who guarded him ; he was, in fact, a model prisoner.

But though Lee Song had received his sentence with no display of emotion, one person in court that morning had seemed much distressed. This was a young clergyman who had not long been in Malaya. He was not attached to a

Mission but to one of the English Churches. The rules governing his appointment forbade him to proselytise, but at a social function where many people had been invited to meet one of the dignitaries of his Church, the young priest talked with the doctor and helpers of a Medical Mission, and gladly accepted their invitation to call and see how their work amongst the poorer classes of the native population was progressing. This led to an inspection of a day-school run by two American Missionaries and their wives. Here he was charmed by the scholars, girls of Chinese nationality, bright, intelligent little folk, mostly children of middle-class shopkeepers in the town. Two sisters who talked to him without a trace of shyness struck him as particularly attractive, and on his subsequent visits to the school he always chatted with these two little maidens.

One evening, when taking a short cut from the Street of Shoe-makers to the Basket-makers' quarter, the young clergyman heard shrill voices calling : ' *Tuan Padlee, Tuan Padlee !* ' (All priests, whatever their denomination, are addressed as *Padre*, in Malaya.) On turning round he saw his two little friends of the Mission School. They greeted him with joy and led him to a Chinese general store—a miniature 'Universal Providers'—where they introduced him to their father, the shopkeeper, Lee Song, who at once apologised for the boldness of his offspring and offered a chair and hospitality. He called his son—a lad of sixteen—from the back of the shop, and, after presenting him to the visitor, told of his hopes for the boy's future.

Lee Song was not a wealthy man, according to Chinese standards in Malaya, where the merchant princes lived in luxurious splendour in palatial dwellings on the outskirts of the big towns. He was Straits-born, his grandfather had come down from China and soon after his arrival in Malaya

had earned his living as an itinerant seller of cakes. His 'shop' consisted of two packing-cases depending from each end of a *kandar* stick. The case that hung behind was fitted with the primitive cooking arrangements for baking the cakes shown in the case hanging from the other end of the long flat stick balanced on one shoulder. The portable kitchen and show-case bobbed up and down as the bearer trotted along with that peculiar gait—half walk, half run—of the Chinese hawker. When sufficient had been saved, Lee Song's grandfather had rented a market stall where he cooked and displayed a more varied assortment of dishes dear to the Chinese taste—fried bananas—strips of fat pork—balls of spiced meat on slender bamboo sticks—together with many fearful and strangely coloured drinks.

From these small beginnings, Lee Song's father and grandfather had been able to take a shop; now both were dead and Lee Song carried on the business which provided him with a good income and looked like giving a good return in the future for his son.

After that first chance meeting, the young clergyman often visited the Chinese family at the shop and Lee Song always treated him with the greatest respect. Conversation with the Padre was carried on in a mixture of English and Malay. Lee Song spoke the language of the country in the clipped Chinese fashion, and to it he and his wife added odd English words and phrases they had picked up from the children. This often resulted in a verbal tangle, but the two little daughters of Lee Song could generally unravel it, and the young clergyman began to think he was getting to know this Chinese family really well. He was too new to the East to realise that one may spend a lifetime amongst Chinamen without even scratching the veneer that covers the real man. True—this was Malaya—not China, but though Lee Song,

like his father, was Straits-born and had never been to China, he was as truly Chinese as one who had been born and bred in China. The keeping of festivals—all the ritual regarding ceremonies—and the hundred and one superstitions were rigidly observed ; though Lee Song's address was Malaya, to all intents and purposes he lived in China.

His small daughters took part in the religious services at the Mission School ; they regarded them as part of the curriculum and troubled little about the precepts the teachers tried to impress on their pupils. The Padre often asked questions concerning the religious part of their training ; with inherent courtesy the little girls answered with words they thought would please, they were too young to probe their real feelings in these matters.

The Padre made no attempt to convert this family to his religion, he felt that merely conversing with the children about Bible stories could do no harm, nevertheless he hoped the seeds of his own faith might flourish even in the stony soil of Chinese superstition.

Now Lee Song lay under sentence of death, there was no doubt of his guilt, he had in fact admitted it. The Padre attended court day after day as the case progressed and he had been first puzzled, then horrified. Why had Lee Song done this terrible thing ? Strange too, his family seemed to think he had done well—not ill—in committing this murder. Even the Police Commissioner—a man who spoke the same dialect of Chinese as Lee Song, for he had spent many years both in China and Malaya—had said that the crime was inevitable under the circumstances. In his opinion, Lee Song could not have done otherwise than vindicate his honour, but of course the Government could not condone that sort of thing. But then, the Padre and many others considered



the Commissioner of Police a peculiar man ; like many people who take up the study of the Chinese language with avidity, Chinese matters possessed him, and he was dubbed by his compatriots as ' Chinese mad.' These were the old days when there were fewer social distractions and a man often threw himself into the study of language and race with the zeal of an enthusiast.

As the Padre went over the events of the past few days he remembered other remarks made by the Commissioner. When the Padre had expressed his sorrow, referring to the condemned man as ' My friend,' the Commissioner had said :

' You may *think* you are a friend of Lee Song's, but you are just so much a friend as Lee Song allows you to be, in his own mind he probably only tolerates you.' And again :

' Hard luck we had to pull him in ; he knew we should in the long run ; he will give no trouble, a grand funeral is all he wants now.'

On being asked by the Padre if he might visit the prisoner the Commissioner had readily given his consent, ' though,' he said, ' what you and Lee Song will find to talk about I cannot imagine !'

The Padre took full advantage of the permission granted to him and Lee Song was always glad to see him, though the prisoner seemed amused at the Padre's obvious anxiety for one in such a position. Lee Song asserted that he was ready to die, he said he knew he must pay the price for what he had done. The Padre, impressed by this fatalistic attitude, remarked that were he in Lee Song's place he should not feel so calm. Lee Song smiled. ' If fate decrees that you must die, what can do ?' he said, and added : ' What would you do in my place ?'

The Padre tried to explain that he should pray to be for-

given in order that his soul might be saved. He spoke of his belief in a Saviour named Jesus Christ, but his lack of knowledge of native tongues hampered him sorely ; naturally with only a few English words added to his imperfect Malay and his complete ignorance of Chinese he could not hope to express the precise meaning of his faith in the Divine Redeemer of Mankind. The Padre had seen little of life in the raw, throughout his life his training had been largely religious, he was more at home in a world of books than in a world of men, an idealist rather than a realist.

Lee Song asked many questions of the young clergyman in the days that followed, and at the end of the first week after the trial said to him in a mysterious whisper :

‘ You say if you die Jesus Clist save you ? ’—R’s are ever a stumbling block to the Chinese tongue.

‘ I hope so,’ replied the Padre.

‘ Then,’ went on Lee Song excitedly, ‘ if He save *you*, why not He save *me*. I have money, plenty dollars saved for my funeral ! ’

The Padre was shocked—horrified—he really tried to explain that Lee Song must not speak in that way of the Christ, but he only made Lee Song more certain that this Man must be very important and that a lot of money was needed for His services. The Padre was greatly distressed ; he felt that he could not deny that Christ would save the soul of the Chinaman, but how to make him understand that it was the soul he referred to and not the body was beyond his power. To consult with others would mean that he would be accused of trying to convert the prisoner and of that he was not guilty. The more earnest the Padre was, the more sure Lee Song became in his belief that his release could be accomplished. Again and again he returned to the subject until the Padre gave up in despair and tried to change

the conversation. Then towards the end of the second week Lee Song asked a direct question of the Padre. 'When the day comes,' he said, 'will you help me?' and the Padre, thinking that Lee Song would need support on that awful morning, replied, 'Of course I will.'

Lee Song sighed with satisfaction, he had worked things out in his Chinese mind according to Chinese standards, and he concluded the Padre would naturally be reticent about this Friend of his called Jesus Christ, but now that he had the promise of help all would go well, he could arrange about the amount to be paid later on. He thought much of what the Padre had said, he would have liked to know exactly *how* the Padre's Friend proposed to save him. He had heard that in China a substitute could be bought for a substantial sum and the promise of a fine funeral, the exchange being effected on the way to the scaffold, but this was Malaya where things were much more strict. Lee Song smiled as he thought how difficult it would be to bring off a coup like that under the nose of the Commissioner—the *Tuan Besar*—a man not only aware of all that went on in and outside the jail but one who never took bribes, and Lee Song was quite sure a large sum would have to be spent in bribes. So the prisoner thought and wondered, being so much alone his idea of someone rescuing him from his unenviable position was continually with him, and before long he thought of it as a certainty.

At the beginning of the third week Lee Song's wife asked her husband what arrangements she was to make for his funeral.

'Hush!' said her husband. 'Wait till the watchful one gets to the end of the passage.' Together they listened, the sound of the warder's footsteps became fainter, then Lee Song said: 'Say nothing to anyone of this, I may not die,

the Padre has promised to help me, he talks of a Friend of his, I hope He will save me.'

The wife was doubtful. 'Who is this Friend?' she asked. 'No one could possibly get you out of here without the *Tuan Besar* getting to know of it.'

'You will tell no one the name, it is a Man called Jesus Clist. The Padre says if he like me, this Man save *him*, why should He not save *me*?'

'Jesus Clist!' exclaimed the woman. 'I know that Name, the children speak of Him.'

'What do they say of Him?' asked Lee Song eagerly.

The woman thought for a moment, she spent more time with the children than their father did and had picked up more of the phrases used at the Mission School.

'I think He must live at the school,' she said; 'they sing songs about Him.'

'If they sing songs about Him, He must be an important Person,' commented Lee Song.

The woman was of the opinion that He was *very* important, 'I know!' she exclaimed. 'The song says "Jesus Clist is lizzen to-day"'—she had remembered the first line of the Easter hymn.

Lee Song gave a sigh of satisfaction, then there really *was* such a Man as the Padre had described. If only he could get him to say how much money was needed all would be well. Though Lee Song had been resigned to death, it was only natural that he should be pleased to think he was not to die after all.

During the Padre's next visit he was reminded of his promise. 'You will help me?' asked Lee Song once more, and again the Padre gave his word.

'Have you paper?' went on Lee Song, 'and something with which to mark on it?'

'Yes,' said the Padre. 'You wish me to take a message for you?'

'Yes, yes,' said Lee Song, and the visitor took a leaf from his pocket-book and handed it to the prisoner together with a pencil. It took the Chinaman some time to trace characters upon the paper with a pencil, used as he was to a brush-pen, but at last it was done. Folding it he wrote an address on the outside. 'There,' he said, 'take that to number *ampat ampat*—four four, in the Street of the Goldsmiths, give it to anyone behind the counter and they will give you a present.'

The Padre was embarrassed, he protested. 'But I do not want a present.'

Lee Song smiled, the Padre was behaving beautifully, quite according to Chinese standards. 'I know,' said Lee Song, 'but you take that chit, *ev-lee-t'ing* all light now.'

Lee Song was jubilant, he knew that all his own people were searched on entering and leaving the jail, but he guessed rightly that the Padre would not be subjected to an examination.

So, to please Lee Song, the Padre took the chit and later in the day made his way to the Street of the Goldsmiths. Number forty-four was a shop—a jeweller's—and on handing the chit over the counter the Padre was surprised to find himself treated as an honoured guest. He was taken to a room at the back of the shop, an apartment furnished lavishly, with black-wood chairs beautifully inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and many finely carved stools and tables. He was soon joined by an old Chinaman, who, speaking in Malay, said :

'You are willing to help our poor friend Lee Song?'

The Padre affirmed that he was willing to do all he could to help his Chinese friend. 'You are very kind,' said the

other as he signalled to someone in the shop, adding, 'There is no need for more words.' A Chinaman brought in a cotton bag, and placed it near the old Chinaman, who tapped it and said :

'This contains five hundred, how much more is needed ?'

The Padre stared. 'Five hundred what ?' he asked. The old man smiled as he opened the top of the bag.

'Look,' he said.

*The bag was full of silver dollars.<sup>1</sup>*

The Padre shook his head violently, 'No—no !' he exclaimed, and the Chinaman smiled.

'Not enough ?' he said. 'How much more ?'

The Padre was in deep water ; he guessed this old man, who was addressed as *Towkay* by the other Chinese in the shop, was an important person ; he seemed to take it for granted that the Padre had come for money. Knowing his limitations with regard to language the Padre hesitated, then he decided.

'Give me back the chit,' he said, 'I must consult with my friend.'

The *Towkay* bowed, handed back the note, saying : 'It is well, but do not delay, there is not much time.'

The Padre left the shop, very puzzled as to what the *Towkay* meant. The next day being a Sunday he was on duty most of the day, but he made up his mind to go and consult the Commissioner the very first thing on Monday morning.

. . . . .

The execution was fixed for Tuesday, and on the Monday morning the Police Commissioner asked his chief clerk :

'What arrangements have Lee Song's people made for his

<sup>1</sup> This was before the days of paper currency in Malaya.

funeral? I suppose the wife wants it to start from here, or is it to go from the shop?’

‘No mention has been made of the funeral, sir.’

‘What!’ exclaimed the Commissioner. ‘Do you mean to tell me that the wife has not asked to have him put in his own coffin?’

‘No, sir, the matter has not been mentioned to anyone.’

‘But this is most extraordinary; what is the meaning of it?’

‘I do not know, sir; it is very peculiar.’

‘Peculiar!’ repeated the Commissioner, ‘it is amazing! I have never known such a thing in a case like this, have you?’

‘No, sir.’

‘What do the warders say?’

‘They say the prisoner talks much with the English Padre, sir.’

The Commissioner smiled and remarked: ‘The Padre can do him no harm.’

‘The Padre is coming into the courtyard now, sir.’

The young clergyman entered the office and, laying the chit on the desk, said: ‘I am in need of your advice. Lee Song gave me that note; he asked me to take it to the Street of Goldsmiths . . .’

‘Wait,’ interpolated the Commissioner, and he dismissed the clerk. ‘Now go on, Padre,’ he said.

‘I presented the chit at the address Lee Song told me to, and they wanted to give me a present of money, which of course I could not accept. As I did not wish to offend anyone I have come to ask you what I had better do about it.’

‘Tell me exactly what happened at the shop.’ The Padre



did so while the Commissioner studied the characters traced by Lee Song on the chit. He looked very grave.

'You do not know what this chit says?' he asked.

'No,' was the answer.

'Well, it instructs the Kongsì to pay you any reasonable sum for the help you are about to give him.'

'But I have done nothing,' said the Padre, thoroughly mystified.

'It says nothing of what you *have* done, but of what you are willing to do on the day of execution.'

'But all I said I would do was that I should be glad to help Lee Song at the last hour!'

'Sit down and tell me what you and Lee Song have talked about during these days.'

The Padre related the nature of the conversations he had had with the prisoner.

'H'm, it looks as if he misunderstood you,' commented the Commissioner; 'his wife will be here shortly, we may get it out of her, there is something funny going on somewhere.'

'I assure you . . .' began the Padre.

'Oh,' said the Commissioner, 'I don't mean you have done anything you shouldn't, but here we are within twenty-four hours of this execution and Lee Song has made no preparations for his funeral, which is most extraordinary in the case of a Chinaman.' The speaker gave orders that Lee Song's wife was to be brought into the office when she arrived and while they waited for her, the two Europeans discussed the matter, the Padre telling of his difficulties in talking of religious subjects with Lee Song.

Lee Song's wife was shown in; she smiled and gave the greeting usual in Malaya:

'*Tabek, Tuan.*'

The Commissioner asked her what arrangements she had made for her husband's funeral; she fidgeted and giggled, remembering her husband's caution not to mention the name of the Padre's Friend. So with a silly smirk she said:

'I not know.'

'But,' went on the Commissioner, 'you know your husband is to die to-morrow.'

Again the same answer: 'I not know.'

'But you *must* know that this is Lee Song's last day on earth. Have you made any preparations for the funeral?'

'No, Tuan.'

'Why not?'

The woman looked at the Commissioner and then at the Padre, the two were evidently friends, so it was likely that both were in the plot. She knew little of Government affairs but she heard the talk in the town, and knew that the *Tuan Besar* was called 'the walk-straight Tuan.' Still, doubtless he had his price and she felt sure he knew of the plot Lee Song imagined was going forward, *of course* he did, but she must answer with care, so she said:

'Tuan, Lee Song say he no die, so no funeral.'

The Commissioner settled himself more firmly in his chair, then he spoke very earnestly, using the Chinese dialect familiar to Lee Song and his wife.

'Listen to me,' he said, 'your husband cannot escape, he dies to-morrow. I say this, and I *know*. Now why has nothing been done about the funeral? You do not wish your husband to be put into a plain coffin such as that we keep for common criminals, do you? Why has no coffin been sent here of the kind usual for a man of Lee Song's standing? I tell you there is no chance of anyone taking his place at the last moment, we keep too good a watch, your husband does not leave this building alive.'

The woman stared at the speaker, wondering what to believe. Would Lee Song's hopes be realised? It would be a terrible thing if he *did* die to-morrow. She looked a bit scared and said in a timid voice :

'Lee Song say Man save him.'

'But who, who can save him now?'

'I not know. Lee Song say Fliend of *Tuan* Padlee,' said the woman, looking at the young clergyman.

'Impossible!' exclaimed the Padre, but the Commissioner persisted in his questioning. 'And do you know the name of this Man?'

'Yes, *Tuan*.'

'Then who is it?'

The woman drew her lips tightly together, then after a pause said : 'Lee Song say no tell.'

The Commissioner was very patient, once more he explained that it was impossible for her husband to escape the gallows and added : 'You *must* tell me the name of this Man. I shall keep you here until you do.'

At this the woman looked frightened. 'If I say, you no tell Lee Song,' she said in English. The Padre, who had not understood the previous bit of Chinese conversation, became alert as the Commissioner assured Lee Song's wife that anything she said would be treated as confidential.

Then suddenly the woman turned to the Padre and said : 'You know, *you* tell.'

The Padre looked blank. 'I don't know what you mean,' he said, but a fear clutched at his heart, he remembered the earlier talks in the prison cell.

'All light,' said the woman. 'I tell.' She leaned over the desk and whispered, 'Lee Song say Man name Jesus Clist save him. He Padlee's Fliend.'

The two Europeans looked at each other. 'Oh, I feared

it,' said the Padre; 'it is my own fault.' But the Commissioner took little notice of the remark; he again spoke seriously to Lee Song's wife in her own tongue. He made her understand at last that it was her husband's soul could be saved, but that nothing could save his life.

That she understood was evident from the distress manifest on her face. She whimpered, wrung her hands in a hopeless gesture and wailed. '*Tuan*, is this true, my man dies to-morrow?'

'Even so,' said the Commissioner, 'at eight o'clock to-morrow, he dies.'

The woman showed signs of hysteria. '*Tuan, Tuan*,' she sobbed, 'he knows not—there is so little time—what can I do?'

'Tell me,' asked the Commissioner, 'the coffin is ready?'

'It has been booked these many years past, *Tuan*, but the coffin-maker lives far out of the town and there are the banner-makers, the mourners, wailers, all to be commanded. Money papers to be bought and men hired to burn them to pay Lee Song's way after death. Food must be cooked to sustain him. I am no longer young, *Tuan*, my son must be at the shop, the two others are too young to help. Oh, woe is me!'

The Commissioner knew that this woman spoke truly; though she was not old according to European standards, yet women age quickly in the East and Lee Song's wife would find it beyond her strength to arrange so much in so short a time. However, he owned one of the few motor-cars in Malaya at that time and this he intended placing at the woman's disposal. Calling his clerk, he gave the order: 'Tell my *sais* to bring the car round and then come up here for instructions.'

Then to Lee Song's wife he said : ' You are not afraid to ride in a motor-car ? '

' Oh no, *Tuan*, it does not harm the *Tuan*, it will not harm me.'

' Very well, then. I suppose you know the way to the coffin-maker's ? '

' Yes, *Tuan*, but there are all the other things. I cannot get round all those shops in the time.'

' There will be no need for you to do so,' was the answer.

The *sais* entered and the Commissioner said to him :

' You will drive this woman wheresoever she desires to go, not leaving her till the arrangements for the delivery of her husband's coffin are complete, and she has been taken to her own home, you understand ? '

The man saluted. Then, addressing Lee Song's wife, the Commissioner went on : ' Go with this man, he will drive you to the coffin-maker's ; in that way, time will be saved and you will not be weary. I know that many things must be ready before the morning, and I myself will go to the *Kongsi* and ask them to arrange all the other details according to your custom. When to-morrow comes, be here at half-past seven together with the bearers, mourners and all the people taking part in the procession. You shall be allowed to see your husband here in this office and your son may come too. The procession is to be formed up under this window, for it is my wish that Lee Song may see it and take comfort at the sight of the funeral prepared for him. Go now, there is yet time, those who prepare for death are wont to work swiftly in this land.'

The woman threw herself at the feet of the Commissioner in gratitude. Gently he raised her and led her to the door where she turned to him and said in a broken voice : ' *Tuan*, tell Lee Song . . . make him understand. . . . '

The Padre had been a silent witness of the scene, but when the woman had gone he said in an anxious tone, 'Is there anything I can do, I feel I am to blame.'

'No,' was the answer, 'it is not your fault, Padre, the man asked you questions you were bound to answer. It is Lee Song who is to blame, he fixed his mind on one idea and nothing you could say would move him. I shall have to tell him later on, but the first thing to be done is to get the funeral prepared. That is most important, it is the only thing we can do for him now, and it will go far towards compensating him if he can see the procession assembled before he dies. Do not go to him yet, come again about two o'clock this afternoon and we will see him together. I must hurry to the *Kongsi* and get them to help, it is imperative that the many *tukangs* be set to work at once.'

Calling a rickshaw, the Commissioner was soon on his way to the Street of the Goldsmiths. He went to the shop visited by the Padre on the Saturday. He was received with much bowing and the old *Towkay* came forward.

'You honour us,' he said as he led the way through to the room at the back of the shop.

'Forgive my hurried speech,' began the Commissioner; 'my business is urgent.'

'Speak, my friend,' said the other. These two men had met in consultation many times, when great issues were at stake.

'*Towkay*,' said the Commissioner, 'there has been a grave misunderstanding . . . the young Padre . . . he visited you.'

'Say no more,' said the *Towkay*, 'I understand.' He smiled and nodded his head. 'So,' he went on, 'you know . . . well, it is your job to find out these things, but you

cannot blame us for taking advantage of an offer to help one of our own people.'

The Commissioner saw that the *Towkay* evidently thought the Padre had been planning to free Lee Song, but he ignored the inference. An explanation could come later on.

'I blame no one,' he said. 'I come to ask your help, *Towkay*.'

'For whom?'

'For Lee Song. No one is more sorry than I am that the law must take its course. To-morrow he dies and owing to this misunderstanding nothing has been prepared for the funeral. I have sent his wife in my car to the coffin-maker's, but so many other details have to be attended to, and I know that from an order of yours, speed and good work will be the result. *Towkay*, I have to go back to the jail and tell Lee Song the plot he expected to succeed, has failed; if I can assure him that his funeral procession will be all he wished it to be, he will go to his death knowing that he has not "lost face." Help me, *Towkay*, a word from you and this town will be a hive of industry to-night and Lee Song's body will have a worthy escort. If it is a case of an extra hundred dollars or so, call on me, I would gladly give it to make sure that my friend goes to the grave with all the display customary for one of his standing.'

The old *Towkay* bowed. 'There is no need of money,' he said, 'the *Kongsi* is wealthy; besides, there will be the money that Lee Song has saved for this funeral. Your offer was a kind one, *Tuan*, it will not be forgotten, nor shall we forget that you called Lee Song your friend. Your request shall be granted, and because of your kindly interest in our people, more than you asked shall be given. Lee Song shall have a funeral that will be the talk of this town for many years to come.'



The Commissioner stood up, he held out his hand, the *Towkay* placed his in it and pressed palm to palm. 'Thank you, *Towkay*, like all your race you are generous. The procession should be inside the courtyard at half-past seven, so that Lee Song may see it before he dies.'

'Is that allowed?' asked the *Towkay*.

'Not usually,' was the reply, 'but in this case, I have ordered that it shall be so.'

'So,' commented the old Chinaman, 'we are not the only generous people. All will be ready at the appointed time.'

No more was said and the Commissioner went away, glad to think that Lee Song would have a funeral that would be the envy of all his friends.

That same afternoon the Padre came to the Commissioner's office. 'Sit down, Padre,' said the officer, 'Now we must have Lee Song in and make him understand exactly what will happen to-morrow.'

'You really think he hopes to escape.'

'Oh yes, there is no doubt while you explained that Christ could save *your* soul, Lee Song fixed on the one idea and thought you could easily arrange for *his* life to be saved. We must face the facts. It was not your fault; this man had doubtless heard the children talking of Christ as Someone important, the children may have helped to lead his thoughts astray, and it is so difficult to discuss religious matters without a perfect knowledge of the language. However, we will have the man in and get things straight.'

'But I cannot understand his tongue.'

'I know, we will both speak through the interpreter,' and the Commissioner gave the necessary orders.

There was no need for much to be said, for when Lee Song was brought in, he looked at the two Europeans and drew

his own conclusions. So the plot had failed. Well, after all, he could hardly have hoped to fool the Commissioner, he might have known it. He heard the Commissioner speaking and then the interpreter translate, but he paid little attention. The Padre then spoke and Lee Song became more alert when the translation of the words began : ' I tried to tell you so many times that your life could not be saved, it is the *soul* of a man that matters, it is the *soul* that we pray may be saved.'

Lee Song looked at the interpreter, he understood now that he heard the explanation in his own tongue, and at once he answered, and said to the interpreter : ' Tell him I want no one to tell me about my soul, tell him I can look after my own soul. Have I not saved many dollars throughout all these years so that my soul may have suitable escort and comfort on its long journey after my body is dead ? Is there not much money put away for my funeral ? The coffin . . . '

He stopped speaking, his voice seemed to trail away, his face changed, he was a pitiful sight as he turned to the Commissioner and asked with quivering lips :

' *Tuan*, the coffin ! I have given no orders, my wife, she knows nothing ! I shall be shamed, I did not want my body to be carried from this place in a common criminal's coffin. I wanted . . . Oh, *Tuan*, help me, help me ! '

Ignoring the interpreter, the Commissioner spoke to the man in Chinese. ' Listen,' he said, ' the coffin you booked is even now on its way here and your wife and the *Kongsi* are making the necessary arrangements. Have no fear, all will be ready.'

Lee Song looked at the clock above the door ; he shook his head. ' So you say, *Tuan*, but the time . . . it cannot be done.'

The Commissioner banged his fist on the table. 'I say it *will* be done,' he said. 'I have been to the *Kongsi* and they promised, and you shall see that promise fulfilled to-morrow.'

Lee Song sadly shook his head again. 'So you say, *Tuan*, but . . .' He still doubted.

The Padre, who had been forgotten, interrupted with : 'What does he say ?'

The interpreter explained that the conversation related to Lee Song's funeral and added : 'He wants his funeral to be "Number One Chinese fashion."'

The Padre was astonished, and remarked in an undertone to the Commissioner : 'Strange that a man so near death should think only of his funeral.'

'I know it seems strange to you,' answered the Commissioner, 'but his real anxiety is to save his "face," and,' he added, 'he shall not "lose face" if I can help it.' Then to the prisoner he said, in kindly tones, 'Go now, Lee Song, and trust me, I will not let you down.'

Lee Song was the picture of misery ; he said nothing, but gazed with a puzzled look at first one, then the other of the two Europeans. It was evident his mind was troubled. The Padre had failed and the Commissioner knew. Would the police officer really help him ?

The Commissioner knew what was passing in the Chinaman's mind and when he had gone his feelings got the better of him.

'Oh, Padre !' he exclaimed, 'this is a terrible thing, you were not to blame, but . . . well, you see, Lee Song trusted me and now . . .' He paused and then went on :

'You are new to this country and you cannot understand the torture that will be Lee Song's this night. To keep on reassuring him does no good, he will not be happy until he

actually sees that procession. I cannot save him from this misery of doubt all through the hours of his last night on earth. I ought to have asked you the subject of your conversations with him; naturally you could see no harm would result, but I could have told you that for Lee Song—now standing on the brink of eternity—anything more attractive than his own faith—his own beliefs to which he and his family have clung for generations—would be unthinkable. Even when you realized he might misunderstand, you could not hope to enlighten him, your knowledge of the languages of this country is as yet too imperfect. Why, I have passed over thirty years between this country and China and I have only touched the fringe of the Chinese character and know but a fraction of their age-old customs and superstitions.' He sighed. 'Oh well, there will be no sleep for the poor soul to-night. Oh, for the morning! I'm sorry, Padre, but I had to let off steam, you *do* understand, don't you?'

The Padre nodded; he rose to go. 'I think we shall all three spend a wretched night,' he said. 'Shall I come in the morning, or do you think Lee Song would rather I didn't?'

'Oh, yes, *do* come. Lee Song bears no malice, you must not think that, he gambled—and lost—that will be his view. Everything will be all right to-morrow, and I'd like you to see how Lee Song takes it.'

'Do you think I am not directly to blame for this mistake?'

'No one is really to blame,' said the other earnestly. 'Lee Song asked you questions, from your answers he fixed on an idea, and when a Chinaman does that he takes some shifting. When he has seen that funeral procession he will be content, for the funeral will be a magnificent one, half this town is working on it all night.'

But as the Padre went home he looked very dejected.

Tuesday dawned bright and clear, the sky was a deep hard blue, not a cloud to be seen, not a breath of air stirred the leaves on the trees in the prison courtyard. The Commissioner was in his office at seven, and at seven-thirty the Padre arrived. He was taken to the office where the Commissioner motioned to him to join him at the window. A commotion at the big gate heralded the arrival of the funeral cortège and as Lee Song's wife and children appeared the Commissioner called to his clerk. 'Go, tell them to bring Lee Song's wife here with her son, then fetch the prisoner.'

While waiting for these orders to be carried out the Commissioner carefully noted the details of the long cavalcade that was entering the gate. He sighed with satisfaction as the big gate closed on the last hired wailer, shutting out the curious crowd assembled outside. He checked over the various sections of the company in the courtyard, knowing how many were the items of dress, symbolic paintings, and superstitious observances that went to the making of a really splendid Chinese funeral. Yes, the *Kongsi* had been very generous. Lee Song would be pleased; such a grand turnout had not been seen for a long time in the town.

The prisoner's wife and son entered the office. As was customary on such occasions they were barefoot, their feet dusty from walking along the road; they wore new sackcloth, oatmeal coloured, but though rough in texture its stiff clean folds gave them a dignified air, as they stood, silently waiting, with that blank look that is the common facial expression of the Chinese when undergoing great emotion. But, when Lee Song was brought in, the face of his wife lit up and she asked eagerly:

'Can he see, Tuan?'

The Commissioner nodded, he was feeling the tense tragedy of the moment—would Lee Song once more feel that a white man would not let him down after he had seen what was in the courtyard?

At his wife's call, the prisoner went to the window and looked with a critical eye upon his own funeral procession assembled below. The coffin—a great tree-trunk, hollowed out and painted red—was being carried into the building. Lee Song's eyes followed it. His wife, anxious that he should miss no detail, called his attention to the rich silken banners with their 'characters,' all cut ruthlessly from stiff brocade costing many dollars per yard. 'See,' she said, 'rolls and rolls of silk were used, no expense spared, they tell me the floor of the shop was strewn with the waste pieces!' She indicated the bearers of the banners in their red coats and hats—the members of the family, supplemented by a number of hired mourners—the many wailers—the musicians—the many big baskets of mock money to pay Lee Song's way to those celestial regions which were pictured in his mind as something quite different from the 'golden streets' and 'many mansions' of the Padre's Heaven. The 'money' consisted of squares of rough packing paper with little dabs of silver paper stuck in the middle of each leaflet and all were cunningly folded like boxes so that the air could reach them quickly and the sum total arrive at its destination the sooner. These papers would be burned by men hired for the purpose; all day long they would go up in a continual smoke spiral outside Lee Song's shop. Excitedly the woman pointed to the food which would sustain the soul in its upward flight. Ducks cooked whole, their long necks hanging over the edges of priceless china dishes, a sucking pig, fruit piled in great pyramids. Lee Song gazed upon it all with evident pleasure, he could even joke

and say : ' My soul will enjoy that meal.' Then he added : ' It is well done, but there has been much work and there is surely more than was arranged for. How was it done—who helped ? They must be rewarded.'

The woman turned to the Commissioner and in a shrill treble told of his efforts on Lee Song's behalf. ' It was the *Tuan Besar*,' she said ; ' he enlisted the aid of the *Kongsi*, he spoke of you as his friend and the old *Towkay* gave the orders.' She went on to tell of the loan of the car, of the Commissioner's consideration for her, and finished : ' Had it not been for him, all this could never have been accomplished and you would not have had so grand a funeral !'

Lee Song faced the Commissioner—for a moment there was silence as the two men stood there, but the heart of the Commissioner was warmed by the look of gratitude in Lee Song's eyes. Then the prisoner spoke, once or twice his voice actually faltered, and the *Tuan Besar* knew that this man was much moved, for a Chinaman rarely shows emotion. Lee Song gathered confidence as his speech progressed and the Commissioner began to show signs of embarrassment—he blushed—once or twice raising his hand, in a deprecating gesture, but Lee Song went on speaking. Then he paused and asked that he might address his son. The boy stood calm and still, paying great attention to the words of his father and when asked a question replied in a clear strong voice.

Then Lee Song said simply, ' I am ready, *Tuan* '—adding with a pathetic smile—' you will come with me, my friend ?'

To the Padre Lee Song said as he shook his head, ' Solly no good—what can do ?'

Two warders ranged themselves one on each side of the man about to be hanged, but the Commissioner waved them



back and with his hand on Lee Song's shoulder, the Englishman walked alongside his friend, the Chinaman ; the eyes of the Commissioner were misty and his head was bowed, but Lee Song walked firmly and proudly to his death, his chin up, his face transfigured.

The Padre waited in the office. When the Commissioner returned he walked across to the window, holding up his hand for silence, so together they watched the scene in the courtyard.

The great coffin was brought out, its scarlet colouring emphasising the conventional lines into which the tree, of which it was made, had been shaped. Following it came the widow and son, they waited while the huge catafalque was carried forward to receive its burden. A gaudy affair this, with its panoply of paper all decorated with brightly coloured paintings of scrolls, beasts and symbolic signs telling of the sex and virtues of the deceased.

The procession formed up : behind the coffin, now under its ornate canopy, walked the family mourners, all barefoot ; the hired wailers took up their positions ; the musicians and banner-bearers fell into line, and all was in order. Then the guard flung open the big gate and Lee Song started on his triumphal progress through the town, the musicians struck up a weird lament and as the coffin passed under the window, the Commissioner stood at the salute.

Then he spoke, and his voice was far from steady as he said : ' There goes a brave man, Padre ; I only hope when my time comes that I can face death as bravely as he did.'

' He said nothing ?' asked the Padre.

' Not a word, but he faced the executioner without a tremor. That sight of his funeral procession buoyed him up. Lee Song was a fine fellow.'

'Yet,' said the Padre, 'one cannot get away from the fact that he was a murderer.'

'Quite so, but look at the way he took his punishment. He knew I was largely responsible for running him in, but he bore no malice. It was my job to get him—I did so. I won—Lee Song lost, and lost like a gentleman. I grant you he was a murderer but, after all, he did his own killing.'

The Padre stared at the speaker. 'What *do* you mean?' he asked.

'Why, Lee Song need not have killed that man. He could have hired someone to do it, but he chose to defend his honour himself.'

'Hired a man!' echoed the Padre, aghast.

'Oh yes, there are such people. We caught a man a few months back—a hired assassin—a small inoffensive-looking individual, but, to my certain knowledge he had committed twenty-two murders, for which he had been well paid!'<sup>1</sup>

'It seems incredible,' said the Padre. 'I wish I understood these people better.' Then he added: 'There is one favour I'd like to ask of you.'

'And that is?'

'I should so like to know the gist of the conversation that took place here just before Lee Song went to his death. Do you think the interpreter remembers something of it, I don't suppose he could remember the exact words.'

'That's where you're wrong, he can tell you every word, it is his business. We'll have him in.'

The interpreter was called. 'Now, Padre,' said the Commissioner, 'tell him what you wish to know.' The Padre repeated his request.

'Where shall I start?' asked the interpreter.

<sup>1</sup> A fact.

'From the time when Lee Song spoke to his wife at that window, nothing was translated after that.'

So the Padre was told of how Lee Song's wife pointed out the various details of the procession, of her delight in telling of the amount of waste in the making of the banners, of Lee Song's praise, his query as to how all had been accomplished in so short a time. Then the interpreter paused. He looked at the Commissioner.

'Do I continue?' he asked.

It was the Padre who answered, 'Yes, please.'

But the interpreter waited. 'Shall I, *Tuan*?' he asked of his superior officer.

The Commissioner considered for a moment, and then said: 'Yes, tell him all. I owe it to the memory of Lee Song.'

The interpreter licked his lips—he was going to enjoy this immensely; when translating for the *Tuan Besar*, the order had ever been—'cut compliments'—now he was to be given the reins. Add to this the fact that he—like many others who had worked long years in this office—worshipped the Commissioner. Never before had he had such an opportunity, he intended to make the most of it. Drawing himself up he declaimed the translation of Lee Song's last words.

He began: 'Then Lee Song turned to the *Tuan Besar*, and spoke thus: "You are my friend and the friend of my house. Yesterday all was black, the shadow of shame was likely to fall upon me and my people, a shadow which you averted. You know how much custom and tradition mingle with the life and death of the Chinese, you have made it possible for my burial to be conducted with all the ceremony and observances due to one of my position. Even this was not enough, you helped my wife, making

the way easy for her, taking care that she was not wearied by the journeys necessary for the accomplishment of the task in front of her. You visited my guild, which has ever revered your name and because you spoke of me as 'friend' they chose to honour me as such, by providing a procession of such magnificence that it will be the talk of this town. Without your help, I might have gone from this place as a common coolie, unattended by the train of followers, to pay for which I have put by many dollars. This day you have saved the face of Lee Song and his family, so that there will be no shame attached to my name—it will be remembered with honour. We are deep in your debt and it is a debt *I* can never repay. My poor thanks are all I can offer, but permit that I speak of this matter to my son."

'Then,' went on the Interpreter, 'Lee Song spoke to his son, thus: "My son, you have heard. This debt—this honourable burden—I place upon your shoulders. Never lay it down, pass it on at your death to your descendants. Watch this man, and whenever it lies within your power, make the road easy for him. In their turn your sons and grandsons shall make smooth the path of this man's descendants, should their ways cross, for he has done well by us this day and we must not cease throughout the ages to show our gratitude." And Lee Song's son promised his father that he would do his part towards paying the debt. Then Lee Song said, "I am ready, *Tuan* . . ."'

'That will do, you may go,' interrupted the Commissioner gruffly. The recital had moved him—it sounded more impressive rendered in English—and when the door had closed on the interpreter, he said quietly:

'Well, Padre, wasn't Lee Song rather fine?'

'Yes,' was the answer, 'and to think that *I* in my pride thought I was the teacher; he could have taught me much.'

I wish I had your understanding—your practical knowledge of these people.'

'And is there any reason why you should not acquire it?'

'You mean I could learn Chinese?'

'Oh, I mean much more than that. Have you any private means, or are you dependent on your salary?'

'I have a small income, enough to live on with care, but go on, tell me what you think I can do.'

'All right, I will. Give up the post you now hold. Go to China, attach yourself to a mission—preferably a medical one—learn not only the language but the hundred and one customs and superstitions governing the lives of the people, live *their* life, not yours, until you really understand them. Then you could either stay in China, or come back here and take up some post in which you could be a friend and counsellor to the Chinese here, who, because of your friendship for Lee Song, would be glad to welcome you.'

'But I hope they do not think that I would have helped Lee Song to escape.'

'Oh, as for that incident, it is known only to ourselves and the people at the *Kongsi*—a word from me and it will be buried for ever, but what will *not* be forgotten is that you were a friend to Lee Song. Do you think your many visits passed unnoticed?' The speaker laughed. 'Why, when you pass by, no longer do they say: "There goes the *Tuan Padlee*."'

'Why, what do they call me?'

'A day or so back I heard you spoken of as "*Kawan Lee Song*."'

The Padre's face lit up. 'The friend of Lee Song,' he said softly. 'Well—I am proud of that title.'

'Even though he *was* a murderer?' said the Commissioner, his eyes twinkling.

'Yes,' said the Padre firmly, and added: 'I am beginning to understand. . . .' He paused; then went on sadly: 'But oh, how I shall miss Lee Song!'

'Ah,' said the Commissioner in sympathetic tone, 'you see how these people wrap themselves round your heart. Think over my suggestion, Padre, you are just the man for the job.'

'But it will take years to learn the language, won't it?'

'Say three years in China, then you could go on studying here or stay there. It is impossible to fix a period, for you will never stop learning once you start.'

'And yet you say the people here would remember me, after all that time?'

'You do not understand, Padre. They would never cease to remember, you may never return to this land, but you will be watched, messages of goodwill will follow you, and many whom you will never meet will know you well, wherever you go and should you return to Malaya your welcome is a certainty. The gratitude of a Chinaman is an everlasting thing and its ramifications of such extent as to be immeasurable. You heard what Lee Song said in thanking me—his injunction to his son?'

'Oh yes! That was beautifully expressed, and he seemed to speak as if he meant it all.'

'He certainly did,' agreed the other, 'that speech was no empty set of compliments. A few years back it would have meant gifts—expensive ones—but lately the Government has rightly restricted such expressions of gratitude to flowers and fruit, and the best of each will be on my table until I retire in three months' time. More than that, if any relative of mine came out East he would find no difficulty in getting

—or in the management of—servants. Risk to life and limb would be lessened for him ; without his knowledge, someone would be watching over his interests as Lee Song said : “to make his way easy.” You see what I mean ?

For a moment there was no answer, then the young clergyman said slowly, ‘I feel like repeating Lee Song’s words : “yesterday all was black.” You have raised me from the depth of despair. I feel there is a hope that I may be of use someday but, oh, I am impatient to start—I wish I could begin this very day—now.’

‘And so you shall,’ said the Commissioner. From a drawer in his desk he took a beautifully carved box containing the metal slab, the ink and brush-pen used for Chinese writing. ‘A present from the *Towkay*,’ he explained, as he began to fashion the Chinese characters on a paper, with the pen made from the tiny pin-tail feathers of the snipe. The writing finished, he handed the paper to the Padre, saying : ‘Take that to the old *Towkay* at the *Kongsi*, he will provide you with a teacher, you can begin at once.’

The Padre rose to depart, and as the two men shook hands the Commissioner said with a smile, ‘You know, people will call you mad : I’ve given you a life sentence.’

The Padre laughed heartily. ‘I know, I cannot thank you enough, but I think you understand how I feel about this. I am going straight to the *Kongsi*—now.’

‘Good,’ said the Commissioner ; ‘come and see me often, I too can help you, until I start for Home. I only wish I had someone of my own blood to do as you are doing, but I have only one son and he shows no inclination to come out East, so Lee Song’s payment of what he was pleased to call his debt to me will never come into the question.’

But someone had been forgotten—a small boy of eight—



the grandson of the Commissioner. After his retirement the Commissioner found in this lad a ready listener to his stories of early days in Malaya and China and though the old man died before the grandson grew up, the memories of those tales remained in the boy's mind.

So it happened that many years after the events related in this story, a fair-haired cadet was appointed to the Malayan Police Service. He heard his friends grumbling, finding the heat trying, the natives troublesome, the country disappointing, but the Commissioner's grandson could never agree with them. For him, things went smoothly. He had no domestic troubles, the Chinese clerks in the office seemed more and more anxious to serve him as the pleasant years rolled by. His home letters were full of enthusiastic tributes, to the country, and its people, but of all the races populating Malaya—Chinese—Indians—Malays—Javanese and many others—it was the Chinese he mentioned more than the others, telling of the help they were to him in every way, what splendid fellows they were, etc.

Lee Song's grandsons were paying the debt.

## AN OLD COUNTRY HOUSE.

BY DAVID LEIGHTON.

THERE is nothing remarkable about the house to which so many stories have attached themselves. It stands only a short way from the nearest road, and is thus not approached by one of those noble, winding drives that give access to most of the Irish country houses. Nor did those who sat in the front windows of the great drawing-room ever overlook a wide prospect of woodlands, meadows and distant mountains; for the ilex trees in the drive, and a stone wall at the end of a paddock, have always bounded the view. As for the house itself, the front part was built while the classical style still lingered: two corinthian pillars support the porch, and a gable, in the Greek temple style, is set into the façade, above the porch, as a kind of ornament. A long wing connects the front part of the house to the kitchens and stables, which form a splendid and imposing quadrangle, where the ghosts of great rounds of beef, of horses, sporting dogs, ostlers, dairy-maids, and farmhands still linger. The garden is separated from the house, and is surrounded by a fairly high wall: it is not one of those massive walls called famine walls, which half-famished peasants raised, in the bad years, in return for food; but it is rather higher and more solid than the ordinary garden wall in Ireland. I suspect that the master spent some money upon relief work, but that his outlay was measured carefully. The house will never be inhabited again: the walls are covered with creepers that have forced their way through the broken windows, and have dislodged the slates on the

roof, and exposed the roof timbers. The good Georgian stonework stands firm, but the window-frames are half powdered with rottenness, and entire tribes of daws sail in and out of the chimneys, confident that a fire in the hearth below, and a sweep's brush, will never disturb them. The garden, like the house, is a burial-ground of old habits : the hot beds and the cold frames are mouldering wreckage ; a few lichen-covered trees that once bore fruit still cling to the walls ; but the beds that were once smothered with potato foliage, or striped with peas, beans, onions and celery, are great tracts of couch grass. I saw a few patches of box ; but the garden paths to which the box served as a boundary have long since been buried beneath accumulations of leaves that have fallen upon them, year after year, and have there rotted themselves into good seed-beds for nettles, dandelions, and coarse, rank grass.

I have searched, diligently, for authentic particulars about the man who gave this house such a sinister reputation, and I have not discovered many. He was born in 1815, and was, thus, thirty-two years old when the famine swept the country. He must have loved his country after his own fashion, for he wrote a book upon the ancient churches of Ireland, which competent historians and archæologists think very ill of. I obtained a copy of the book and read it—hoping that I should discover something of the author's nature in it—but I found it very impersonal : a conscientiously compiled catalogue of old towers, ruined abbeys, lancet windows, Norman and Early English doorways, Celtic crosses and the rest. If a man wrote it to-day, he would hawk it for long before he found a publisher ; but in those days, when families gathered round the fireside and read aloud by turns, it was not so hard to sell goods in the book bazaar. The book is bound in dark green

cloth, and is printed in that most execrable of all printing—the mid-Victorian, before the Ruskinians had raised its standard. All this illustrates the era, but explains little or nothing of the man. I have seen an old country gentleman who knew the man when he was very old: he was, then, extremely sanctimonious, and read prayers to his establishment, twice a day. None of these things gave him the place that he occupies in our local history, and this was first explained to me by the herdsman who tends the cattle that now graze round the old house.

‘Well, sir,’ began the old fellow, ‘’twas in the times when the English had us right down, d’ye understand, and nobody could prosper, except they was with the English. His father was a good man; he had a farm near by to Cloanfeigh, and the family was real Irish, for their name was O’Dea, and had been from all time. Well, his father worked hard and got middling strong, but the family would never have gone forward as they did but for young Michael. He was christened Michael O’Dea, but what should he do, for to advance himself, but turn Protestant, and call himself Magnus Dean; and it advanced him all right, for by the time he was thirty, he was agent to three landlords.’

Authentic history corroborates this. Many tenant farmers made money during the French wars, and certainly the Protestant gentry were more bigotted when the new century was starting, than they had ever been during that long night of Catholic affliction which Protestants call the penal days. It disturbed them to hear that Pitt and his colleagues were giving the liberal Grattan a good hearing. I doubt not, therefore, that only a Protestant could have become agent to the two great demesnes that young Magnus Dean henceforward administered: Colonel Devereux’s, whose lands border the Shannon, and Lord Lichford’s, whose

estate stretched northward, until it reached the Carran mountains.

'Well, then,' the herdsman continued, ''twas an ill day for everybody when Michael O'Dea was made agent; for after he'd been in his post a couple o' years he began his bad ways just when the hunger was coming on us. There was twenty families put out the first year of the famine, and as many more the next year, and gosh, sir, the man had no pity at all; for one day his knockers<sup>1</sup> told him there was a woman lying dead of the hunger in one of the cabins they'd knocked, and ahl he said was, "Then you've buried her; what's the matter with you?" So doesn't that show 'twas only the hunger that was keeping the people from paying the rent; come now, till I show you.'

I walked across two fields, and then along a lane thick with blackthorn: when we reached the end of it, the herdsman drew away a tangle of brushwood, and pointed out the sites of the cabins. I did just detect traces of human habitations; they were in about the same state as the vestiges of a Pictish camp or the middens of a Neolithic settlement. ''Twas on that road the people walked, when they was put out,' said the herdsman, 'and 'twas there that two women fell of the hunger.'

Authentic history neither confirms nor denies this, so here was I a-wondering on a matter that has perplexed and divided our greatest savants: How reliable is tradition? As it is, for the most part, an encyclopædia of nonsense, are we to believe those passages in it that are a little more rational? To my friend the herdsman, to know where some unrecorded event occurred is to produce proof that

<sup>1</sup> The men who evicted tenants at the landlords' orders, so called because they knocked down the wall of the cottage.

it happened. This is not testimony that a historian accepts, or that a judge admits ; but, when all is said and done, our guide-books to the Holy Land would be in a sad case if it were always rejected. In this particular case, I believe the story is accurately told. Somebody saw the terrible scene : the grappling-irons thrown on to the thatched roof ; the walls knocked with a crowbar ; somebody saw the family move off, and watched the women fall, where the may and the blackthorn now mark the turn in the lane. When the business was faithfully described in the cabins that night, it was registered in our local history. Telling these stories is still an art and an entertainment : the cinema and the factory have not yet obliterated our records.

'Well, Danny,' said I, 'it's a bad story ; but what good was Magnus Dean doing to the estate he was managing by treating people so badly ? Why did his masters allow it ?'

'Ach, sir, 'tis easy to see you don't understand at ahl. After the man was turned Protestant, he was for putting out as many as he could, and then making a fair-sized place out of the places they'd left, and letting it to a Protestant he'd bring down from the north.'

I understood better now. Magnus Dean was engaged in what the landlords of those days called cleaning : the smallholders were evicted, whenever an opportunity occurred, and the land 'reset' to new tenants. The local board of guardians was generally advised to grant no relief, in order that hunger might drive the homeless wanderers farther afield. I was, in fact, learning details of a state of affairs that has been, for the most part, recorded in statistics of surplus population.

The herdsman now continued. 'Tis true for you there was many doing the same ; but none near here had his

bad heart, and none was so cruel. There was more than a hundred he'd sworn to have out. They kept in for a time, by paying the rent; but how was anybody to be sure he'd have the rent, every rent day, when he had the hunger in his cabin? And when the knockers came back and asked him, one day, would he wait a little as there was a woman lying sick in one of the cabins he'd ordered to be knocked, he answered, "You may wait till the first wet or frosty night; she won't stay where she is after the thatch is off." Well, when he'd knocked the cabins of them that couldn't pay because they had the hunger, he rested a while; but he soon began again, and this time, he was after evicting them, even if they'd paid, just for to clear the land. And when he started doing this, he ordered ahl the tenants to line the road, with their cattle, when he went to church on Sunday, so's he could count their cattle and put out those that had too few. Now wasn't it very hard on them to be standing like that on a Sunday morning? 'Twasn't much help to him though; for there was some decent men on the next estate, and they lent their beasts to them as thought old Magnus would say they had too few. But wasn't it worse than that when the people began to be afraid he'd put them out for going to mass, and when the priest had to make a little ark, and say mass to them on the hill?

I interrupted the story at this point. 'Surely, Danny,' said I, 'there must be something wrong here. How could a private person prohibit the mass from being said twenty years after the Emancipation Act was law?'

'Ach, not at ahl. 'Tis true for you, 'twasn't for old Magnus to say the mass was forbidden, but he could stop it being said for ahl that. For when the priest at Carrigan said 'twas time a chapel was put up, Magnus he said 'twasnt



to be, and as he was agent for ahl the demesnes round Carrigan, no chapel could be built, for Magnus wouldn't let or sell an inch of land for the purpose. And then the tenants was told, by one of the maidservants at the house, that the old man was planning to put out as many Catholics as he could, so the priest he built a little ark, and the bishop blessed it, and them that was to serve mass carried the little ark into the bog, or up into the hills, and that was where the tenants had to go to hear mass, for fear they'd be put out. Ye can see it if ye like ; it's at Carrigan yet.'

I listened in amazement to this story of an unauthorised religious persecution. Could it be true that one man, an upstart and a mere rent-collector, could thus insult and defy an entire countryside ? I determined to go to Carrigan, when I had time, to inspect the *pièce justificative* of this strange story.

The herdsman went on. ' Well, for ahl his cruel ways, he got very strong. He wasn't a rich man when he left Cloanfeigh and took the big house ; but he grew stronger every year he was there, and when he was old, he ordered a cemetery to be built in his own place. 'Tis there still.'

This detail was indeed descriptive of the upstart's pride, and of his ambition to rank with the highest in the land. There are many private cemeteries in Ireland ; but only the great territorial families built them ; and I, for one, have always thought them memorials of vainglorious pride. I seem to read a ghostly inscription upon each drooping tombstone : a declaration by some great Anglo-Irish lord that death did not level him to his poor Irish bondsmen, and that even his corrupted flesh was to be kept far, far apart from theirs. Poor Magnus Dean's pride in his own corpse availed him but little ; for this is how the herdsman ended the story.

'Well, he was struck very sick one day, when he was riding home, and the people at the great house had to help him down off his horse. He went straight to his bed, and he well knew he'd never be out again, for, for the three days he lay dying, he was worrying ahl the time the cemetery he'd ordered to be built wasn't finished, and indeed they'd hardly started to put up the wall when he died. Well, it seems the family arranged with the parson that he should be put into the cemetery temporary, and moved back again when they'd finished his own place. And the putting of him into the cemetery temporary was done quietly: the real funeral was to be when the time came for him to be brought back home, and that was how 'twas done. Well, 'twas longer than they thought before the wall and the gate to the private cemetery were finished, but when they were ready, at last, they came to fetch him. The hearse was there, and there was a good share of the gentry; but the tenants didn't go except one, who'd been put out of his cabin, ten years before; and when his neighbours asked him what in the world was he doing going to the funeral, he said wasn't it reasonable to see he really did get buried and couldn't come out again. Well, the parson read a prayer before the grave was opened; then the diggers they opened it—they hadn't far to go, for Magnus was only there temporary—and 'twasn't many minutes before them diggers said he wasn't there at ahl. Some of them he'd wronged had taken him away, d'ye understand? Now wasn't it very severe on the family to go there to take the master away, and to have the parson praying, and ahl the locals standing round, only for to find him gone?'

I had no difficulty in conceiving the consternation of that afflicted family: three miles to go in carriages that had to follow an empty hearse; every cottager along the road

standing at his door to watch the ludicrous procession ; home reached ; the carriages dismissed ; the family at last assembled in the great sitting-room that looks out upon the ilex trees in the drive ; and then, what a sorry discussion. How many persons in the cabins that were dotted all over the countryside were party to the insult ? In all probability at least a hundred families knew all about it, and would, if questioned, exercise their marvellous talent for talking interminably without uttering a single unguarded word. It would be fruitless to seek information from them, and all the police in the county would never extract a helpful syllable. I wondered, also, whether the family talked openly about what must have weighed so heavily upon them, or whether pride kept them silent : how well the blow had been aimed ; how admirably the insult had been arranged. The stately and ceremonious procession that old Magnus had bequeathed to his corpse, the solemn translation of the coffin, and its re-burial in what old Magnus believed would be the family demesne for centuries, all turned to buffoonery and made ridiculous, and by whom ? By the cottagers whom he had driven from their homes ; by the bondsmen whom he had loaded with insults, so that now there were gibes where there should have been awe and dread ; laughter where there should have been tears and sorrow. Yes ; I agreed with the herdsman, it was very severe on the family.

‘ Did they ever get him back, Danny ? ’ I asked.

‘ Well, sir, they did, and ’twas this way. There was many people expecting to be put out, when the old man died, but the months went by, and there was no one put out, and so they began to see that young Magnus wasn’t going to be that way at ahl, at ahl, and before long there was many of the locals saying wasn’t it very hard on him

to go about not knowing where his father was lying. Well, one day a man came up with his rent, and he was owing great arrears, so he went into the office, and he said, "Here's the rent, your honour, but I can't find the arrears, so what's to be done?" Young Magnus he just looked up, and took the rent, and said, "I know you can't pay the arrears; you can stop where you are, and begin again." So the man answered, "Long life to you, for you're a lenient man. I'll see can I get news for you." So he went to them that had taken the body away, and what with talking, and making sure nobody'd ever know who'd done it, they made a plan for him to have his father back. You see, they'd only taken the coffin across the cemetery wall, and put it ten yards outside, so 'twas easy to start opening a drain through the place where they'd put him, and to pretend they'd found him, and that's how 'twas done.

The news was announced at the great house, two days later, and old Magnus was, at last, taken very quietly, and by night, to where he now lies.

I returned home, still wondering about the accuracy or inaccuracy of these strange stories. When I got back, I found young Michael Fitzpatrick, a young lad of twenty-five, working at a job that I had given him on my barn. I wonder whether he hears these stories, thought I, or do the old people exchange them with one another? If the youngsters hear them, do they credit what they hear, or have the national schools, popular science conveyed by radio, and what they are pleased to call the ticknicks (technical schools) made them sceptical? I tested the point. Had Michael ever heard of Ashfield Park? Yes, surely; and the story of oppression, cruelty and avarice was repeated word for word. Had I asked Michael to show me where the women who had been evicted fell on the road, from

hunger and despair, I should have been taken to the spot that the herdsman showed me. There were, however, two additions.

'Ach, he was wicked ahl right, and if the clergyman had known what his knocker saw, he'd never have buried him. You see, when he lay dead there was nobody wanted to say good-bye to him, except his knocker, and he came the evening of the second day, and the people at the house was wondering why he went away so quick; but 'twasn't wonderful at ahl; for when he went in, for to say a prayer, he saw that the grass was growing out of his master's chest, and there was a goat standing by the bed eating the grass. And 'tis sure, though they put him into that private cemetery, you wouldn't find him there now if you was to dig for him; for 'tish't so long ago, an old man was walking through the fields near the park, and he turned to a hedge because it came on showery. He stayed there a while till the shower was passing over, and, as he got up to go, a man came in to take his place, and 'twas Magnus Dean.'

This is a new strain in folk-lore. I cannot find that Sir James Frazer ever discovered a belief that the skeletons of those whose spirits wander have migrated from their resting-place; but this is not surprising, for the good Sir James did not explore the folk-lore of our local hatreds, hatreds that grow in transmission, until young fellows who never saw Magnus Dean conceive it a solemn duty to invent proof of the old fellow's eternal punishment.

I set out for the cemetery on a May morning, when the peasants were at mass. It is small, with a great conifer growing from the centre of it; its boundaries are: a stone wall with formidable iron palings—a perfect example of the suburban cemetery style of architecture; and a steep cliff, covered with whin and brambles, which falls sharply

into a rocky stream. The old man, his wife, his son, and an old family servant are buried there ; the inscriptions on the tombstones merely declare the fact. When I had visited the grave that my young roof-builder believes to be empty, I walked to the house, for the last time, and, as I went through the grounds, I realised that there was something remarkable about the cemetery. The site had been so chosen that it can be seen from two points only : it cannot be seen from any of the rooms on the ground floor, but it can be seen, and clearly, from the windows of the biggest bedroom in the house ; it can also be seen from what was once a shaded lawn, surrounded by boulders that have been piled up to form a grotto. If old Magnus hoped that his resting-place would be looked at, daily, from the room in which his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren would first see the light, and from the lawn where they would play with their nurses, his hopes are shattered ; for the spreading ivy has burst through the windows of the empty bedroom, and grazing cattle chew and tear the pasture of the ruined lawn.

## *HE WALKS WITH BEAUTY.*

BY JESSIE K. MARSH.

### I.

I WAS anxious to see how the man would react to the experience. I had studied him for several months and I still had no understanding of his outlook on life, whether, indeed, he had an outlook or whether perception of beauty was lost in the daily struggle with monotony and want. This plan of mine seemed likely to solve the problem, I would try it.

My friend Jim Woodyatt, who on the death of his wife had sold me his Broadland cottage, had told me about Sam Marjoram. He spoke of him as a man starved of beauty. I had laughed at this curious description of a field labourer; starved of food or beer or tobacco was comprehensible, but of beauty, and by that Jim meant colour, and then form, or line, or fabric, seemed to me exaggerated. After all it was only a guess on Woodyatt's part, for the man had told him nothing. Inarticulateness was Marjoram's chief characteristic, he said.

I decided that I would know him better. Already I knew something of his well-kept garden, which Jim and Mary had described as wonderful, considering— Considering he had no money, very little time, and none of the assurance that enables a man to beg seeds here or a cutting there. Jim had told me of a tragedy of dahlias which his wife had promised, and died before she could give, and how glad he had been to let Marjoram have the plants ordered for the cottage garden which he, Jim, had had no heart to plant.



It was now mid-July and some of these dahlias, removed by two generations from Woodyatt's gift, would be coming into flower.

Marjoram had changed his cottage since the Woodyatts' days and his new home lay down a lane, in a wet summer inches deep in mud, but with soil so fat that anything would thrive in it. I at once recognised the house by the sturdy dahlias topping the railings, dahlias not yet in flower but with colossal buds. I made myself known as the new tenant of Staithe Cottage, the friend of Mr. and Mrs. Woodyatt. At the name the man's dull face brightened and he took my extended hand.

'She was a kind lady and her death right broke the poor gentleman up. Do you know what he is a-doing now, sir?' he asked.

I told him what I could of Woodyatt's movements and then I asked if I might see his garden. 'I don't know much about things,' I had to confess, 'for till now I have never had a garden of my own. I am a Londoner, you know.'

'Well, you've a good bit of land to start on, grow anything, will that garden at Staithe Cottage. Are you a dahlia grower like Mrs. Woodyatt, sir? See here, I've got them all named as Mr. Woodyatt give 'em, that's Ta ra ra, the biggest of the lot, a rare fellow; folks at Yarmouth, that's where I send my blooms, say they've never seen anything like it.'

I am no dahlia expert, so I accepted what I was told of Ta ra ra, only doubting the name as an unlikely one. Later, when it was in flower, I consulted a catalogue and identified it as Aman Ra, but as Ta ra ra it still lives in my memory, for I am a Londoner once more. My wife tired of the cottage in one season: the bad weather of that late August

and early September may have been the cause. Still I have seen it again, for their one experience of the water had so whetted my boys' appetite for sailing that I have promised them a fortnight on a yacht every year while their mother samples the pleasures of a new seaside place and is primed with information as to society and amusements by the time we join her.

But during the last weeks of my one summer as a Norfolk householder I managed to see a good deal of my gardening neighbour. His strange, inarticulate enthusiasm for what was in his garden and mine amused me. I gave him delphiniums and had the promise of dahlias for the following season. I asked him what he thought of the great blue spikes, seedlings of Mary's costly purchases, and I knew he longed to compare them to the blue of a New Zealand sky, or a Mediterranean Bay, or a sapphire, or would have had he ever seen any of these things. But all the words he could find were, 'They're prime.'

The purple buddleia, so beloved of butterflies, excited his admiration and I gave him the cuttings he dared not ask for. Why, with its branches hanging over the lane, he had never taken any during the two years the cottage stood empty was a mystery to me. Was it inherent honesty or was it lack of courage?

Probably the fear of neighbours' tongues. They would have known that a great useless plant like a buddleia, shading valuable cabbages and robbing the soil of goodness that belonged to parsnips and potatoes, could only have come by theft into the possession of a man who had not a penny to spare even for flowers of potential market value.

Well, Marjoram reaped a harvest this summer and I watched with interest and a little dismay how these treasures were encroaching on ground formerly devoted to much more

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useful products. For Marjoram had but a farm labourer's wages, and as well as a sickly wife there were four children to feed. So potatoes were of more value than delphiniums, and a satisfied emotional sense a poor substitute for a starved body. At times I really feared to meet Mrs. Marjoram and would time my visits to an hour when I knew she had gone to 'oblige' a summer visitor on the river-bank.

## II.

When back in Town I often thought of this Norfolk field labourer, but it was not till the May of the next year that I had my great idea. So pleased was I with myself for thinking of it, that I at once communicated it to my wife.

'Supposing I brought Sam Marjoram to London and took him to the Chelsea Flower Show? That would give him something to think about till the day of his death. All loveliness so concentrated that he could pack it in his brain and keep it as a store from which to draw when the monotony of sugar-beet pulling and the dull plodding behind the plough became too much for him.

Jane was not accustomed to hear me break into rhapsodies before breakfast. She looked at me critically.

'Well, Jane——?'

'We can't have the man in the house, Mrs. Beamish would give notice on the spot,' was her answer.

Mrs. Beamish is the feminine half of the married couple who compose our entire staff. They are valuable and they know it and demand preferential treatment in accordance with their worth.

'Of course not,' I answered, 'but it will be easy to find somewhere to put him up.'

Which I did at a hostel not far away. There he would be well looked after and saved any of those agonising

decisions which in lodgings he might have been obliged to make. I intended to give him two nights in Town by making up to him the wages of three lost days of work. I would meet him at Liverpool Street in the late afternoon of Wednesday of the show week and give him the whole of Thursday at Chelsea ; somehow I did not see him mixing with the Wednesday crowd. Besides on Wednesday afternoon nothing can be seen of the flowers, so Jane should have that afternoon for the enjoyment of her friends and her friends' toilettes, while we two keen horticulturalists reserved for ourselves the comparative emptiness of the Thursday tents.

Each year the show passes all expectations, but to my mind this show outdid all its predecessors. As I left it to take the car to Liverpool Street to meet my guest I could but thank God that in these days of flux and uncertainty He had left the beauty of flowers unchanged. At this moment I was not seeing it with the eyes of a man who had seen it twenty times before and who daily could enjoy beauty in its highest expressions of music or art or architecture, but with the eyes of one who save in landscape had never known beauty in any form. Well, he would have it to-morrow and I wondered how he would react.

### III.

It was a cold day that Thursday of May when Sam Marjoram and I passed the turnstile and entered the fairyland of flowers. I thought we were early, but people were already leaving so I feared the tents would not be as empty as I had hoped, nor were they. I piloted my guest to the middle of the big tent and said to him :

‘ I’m going to leave you to go around alone so that you

can look at what you like best. I shall be in the tent all the time looking at my favourite things. You'll find wonderful sweet peas and delphiniums that beat yours and mine. Look, Sam, dahlias in May, how have they done it ?'

Marjoram glanced anxiously at the forced dahlias. A look of relief came to his face as he said, 'Not as big as my TA RA RA, sir.'

'Well, you go off now and meet me, at twelve sharp, mind ; by these shrubs and we'll go and have some food.' I walked away, but when I was a bit hidden by the crowd I stopped to observe Marjoram's movements.

At first the enormous tent, the vividness of the exhibits, the jostle and the flurry all about him, seemed so to daze him that he could not move. Then I saw him wander aimlessly down the centre aisle. 'He is going to look at the delphiniums,' I told myself, and I moved towards Blackmore & Langdon's magnificent collection at the far end of the tent.

But Marjoram was arrested in mid-course by something, to him, far more marvellous than delphiniums. After all, they had come into his life, but here, right in the centre of the tent, were things he had never seen or dreamt of. 'Stove and Greenhouse Plants.' Truly it was a wonderful exhibit, and I from the other end of the stand gazed at it with almost as much awe as was marked on Marjoram's face. These products of the tropics, some so gorgeous, some so evil-looking ! I have seen the hibiscus hedges of Ceylon, the lurid poincarias of Panama, the jacaranda trees of Australia and the Cape—perhaps, seen against a blue sky, the loveliest sight in all creation—the bougainvillæas of many countries, but here on this stand were things I had not seen, plants that looked sinister, plants whose beauty seemed poisonous, that conjured up pictures of swamps and jungles and the lurk-

ing perils that beset travellers in unknown places. Marjoram stood and gazed as one entranced.

I saw him furtively stroke a blossom ; its velvet pile was worn by none of the flowers of his daily life. The crotons ! what business had plants to have leaves of such gorgeous colours ? Where did they come from ? What other world was there where things undreamt of here might be the sights of every day ? I could feel the man asking himself these questions. Unheeding the request—never having seen it probably—not to touch the plants, Marjoram laid his hand under one glowing croton leaf and held it there.

Our lunch was a shortened meal. Marjoram was silent, silent even for one who spoke so rarely. He wanted neither food nor drink—he was dazed. I could see that all his desire was to be back in the tent, so I bade him go and said I would follow shortly : I was becoming anxious about my experiment. When I joined him I would make him go round the show with me ; sweet peas and tulips and the wholesome flowers of everyday life should drive those baleful exotics from his mind. I found him as I had expected at ' Stove and Greenhouse ' and still in that questioning, frightened state of incredulity.

' Marjoram,' I said in a casual voice, ' you haven't half seen the show. When you get home the people will want to know about the delphiniums and the poppies and other things and you won't be able to tell them. Come and look at the sweet peas.'

He did not hear me, he was touching the orange spadix of the brilliant scarlet *Anthurium Scherzerianum*. ' Sir,' he asked pitifully, ' can these things really be ?'

It was high time we left the show. I should feel more at ease when my guest was in the prosaic atmosphere of the hostel and away from the sinister fairyland to which I

had given him admission. I shuddered to think what the effect would have been had he found the tent which housed the orchids. Some brains are not strong enough to bear the strain of a whole new world breaking in upon them.

I did not enquire how he would spend the evening, but I imagined he would keep to the countryman's habit of bed before sundown. I thrust into his hands the whole bundle of catalogues which I had gathered in the futile way one collects at flower-shows.

'Something to amuse you for the evening, Marjoram, and then you must take them home to show the people in Bastwick. They'll be interested. And mind you eat a good meal to-night, you had no dinner to speak of. You know the time I shall call for you in the morning? Well, good-bye for the present.'

'Good-bye, sir, and thank you.'

Everything was all right, I assured myself. The man's brain had not been turned; naturally he had been overcome by the strange colours and shapes he had seen. Had he unconsciously longed for all the things that these exotics conjured up, travel, wide horizons, colour and space, the something different, the escape from monotony? And to-morrow he returned to ploughing, and singling turnips, and, in its season, sugar-beet lifting—and an understanding wife. God help him, poor devil! was my thought as I turned my car in the direction of my own pleasant home and Jane.

I found an alteration in the morning; the taciturn man had become loquacious. In the twenty minutes of our drive from hostel to station Marjoram could not ask questions fast enough. Where did this grow, where the other? Where did the croutons come from?

'Crotons! South America, I believe. Nearly all our



hothouse plants come from South America !' This was a sweeping assertion, but it served.

'And the funny red plant with the queer spike, *Anthy* something ?'

'Oh, the Flamingo Plant ?' How could I tell ? I tried to divert his attention by pointing out the Royal Exchange and the Bank of England.

'I have thought of them all night. I couldn't sleep for thinking.'

'Now look here, Marjoram, just put out of your mind all these plants you'll never see growing. When you get back you'll find your sweet peas and pinks and dahlias far more interesting.'

'They're poor things to them others,' was the answer. And even as I stood on the platform, waiting for the train to start, Marjoram asked a last question.

'And what is the name of that red thing, sir, the thing like a trumpet, like a bell ? You said you'd seen it growing.'

There was a whistle and the train began to move. Marjoram leaned from the window, all anxiety.

'Hibiscus,' I shouted. Then I cupped my hands round my mouth to make myself heard above the roar of the train. 'Hi-bis-cus,' to the amusement of Marjoram's fellow-travellers who probably thought I was giving him a tip for an approaching race.

#### IV.

So that was that, my experiment of giving a man a glimpse of beauty and his reaction to it was a thing of the past. In the hurry of work and the social round of early summer Marjoram and his affairs went out of my head. Till August, when once more I walked the lane to his cottage.

The boys and I were lying for the night at the familiar

Staithe. I sent them to get water and provisions while I paid a visit to my sometime neighbour. As I neared the cottage it surprised me to see no dahlias topping the fence. By now they should have been in fullest vigour. As I looked over I saw that they had been replaced by neat rows of lettuces and runner-beans, weedless, as were all Marjoram's crops. Tomatoes were tied to the struts of the palings and opposite the door were several rabbit-hutches. Beauty was gone and utility had taken her place.

Though it was late afternoon Marjoram was not at home and his wife appeared in answer to my knock. She greeted me with covert incivility, but then, the woman and I had never been friends.

'No, you can't see him, sir, he's taken a cow to Martham and won't be home till dark.' She did not ask me in.

'What has happened to the dahlias and all the other flowers?' I said, pointing to the lettuce rows. 'Your husband used to take such pride in them, I thought after the show he would have been keener than ever.'

A long-pent bitterness loosed itself in a torrent of words. 'And that's all the show did for him, wellnigh unsensed him it did. Days and days after he got home he could talk of nothing else, seemed dazed about ordinary things. What d'ye think was the first thing he did when he got back, pulled up all them dahlias though they hadn't been set a fortnight. "Martha," he say, "you want vegetables, you shall have 'em, dahlias ain't worth growing. Now what I saw in London, they were things if you like." Oh, sir, you shouldn't have done it, turning a man agin the only things he's able to get.'

My disclaimer was unheeded. "'Martha," he say the next day, "you've always wanted this sunny border for lettuces and Rupert's rabbits, you can have it. I've done

growing flowers, I've got them here," and he points to his head, "they walk about with me wherever I goes." Then he talks about croutons and I thought he was gone right balmy. "Sam," I say, "I wasn't a cook for five years afore I married you," and in good service, sir, where they had late dinner every night in courses, "not to know what croutons are." Fancy calling them bits of bread plants! "Sam," I said, "if you go on about them croutons next place you'll find yourself in will be the 'sylum.'" Oh, sir,' and the woman's eyes filled with tears showing the affection for her man that I have often noticed in nagging women, 'that wellnigh broke my heart when he pulled up the dahlias, though I'd mobbed him to do so. They was his only pleasure. Proud he was of them. Now he works at the vegetables all the evenings without saying a word. If he's got it all in his head, as he say, he keeps it there.'

I turned away from the cottage door, for there was nothing I could say, nothing do. I went down to the little *carr* which lies beyond the cottage and at the first bridge I sat down to think. Either I thought long or I fell asleep, for the sun was sinking when I left the deep shade of the trees.

Before me lay outstretched a world of beauty. In this land of low horizons the great vault of the heavens shows as in few other spots. The marshes were burnished by the setting sun and the river gleamed as a copper streak. Autumn honeysuckle trailed across the hedges and chicory flowered blue at my feet. Where in the fecund gorgeousness of the tropics was loveliness to compare with this?

'And you, Marjoram, see it every day,' and for a moment I thought with distaste of my humdrum life in Town. 'Why want those tropical flowers, Marjoram, when you can have this?' I picked a spray of honeysuckle to take

to the boys on the boat. For the instant I felt I was walking with the beauty I had hoped to give my peasant neighbour.

The while Marjoram was trudging the five miles home from Martham to prick out, if the light still served, *sauce*, as Norfolk calls all cabbage stuff, so that his wife and children should not go short in the winter.

And I firmly believe on that walk he was accompanied by the one thing for which he had always longed. Memory is a friend that rarely betrays.

#### WHO IS SHE ?

*Who is she who comes on stealthy feet,  
With milk-white stars caught in her raven hair ;  
Who is she who hastes the dropping sun,  
And sets the silver moon in motion there ?*

*Who is she who comes with lullabies,  
With homing birds half-sleeping on the wing,  
And owls tucked in her bosom's loveliness,  
Her mantle weighed with dreams that slumbers bring ?*

*Who is she whose coming quiets the earth,  
And sets on fire the sun to haste its flight ?  
She comes on stealthy feet, as shadows move :  
You cannot see her, for her name is Night.*

ELIZABETH TEMPLE WELLS.

## STABLE-YARDS AND HORSES.

BY PAMELA HINKSON.

BUSINESS connected directly or indirectly with horses, plays a much larger part in Irish country life than anyone unacquainted with that life could imagine. It was not for nothing that the ordinary country house of moderate size was built with stabling for anything from ten to thirty horses. Once only in my childhood have I seen every stall of the dozen in our stable-yard filled—that was during the War when, in addition to army horses, we were stabling some of the runners in the local races the next day. It was a wonderful sight to go into the usually deserted yard and see a horse's head looking at one, over every half-door.

Those stable-yards and the stables about them are the very centre of life for those who live in Irish country (as apart from existing). If you did not ride you could only exist. Riding, you live. And we are a race bent on living, however we may achieve it. Without horses and all the life that gathers about them, I do not know what we should do with our days, that these interests and occupations fill. Once, staying in a beautiful house in English country, an old house restored to perfection by an architect of genius, I puzzled over something. The house, set in the very heart of deep country, lacked the feeling of a country house, to me. I discovered it, coming in from a walk on a wet day and looking for somewhere to put the dogs to dry. There was no stable-yard, and no open doors of stables about it—none of the lovely dim stirring or munching of horses within those doors, no empty stall filled with straw into which one

could put a wet dog to dry and get warm. Without such a yard and all that it held for me, that house was set down against the country, rather than in it, like a painted picture.

Our yards are built deep in the country and the country life and are part of it—as much part of it as those strange mysterious, rather dark farmyards, before some house turning its side wall to the road, past which one rides when one is exercising the horses. I don't know how the shadow and mystery of those yards is achieved on a bright winter day, with the sun shining. But it is something characteristic of Irish temperament, and reminiscent of our history perhaps. A wall is built, a turf rick, a shed with a good many holes in the roof, and the yard is in the middle, deep in moving shadow, and out of it anything may come, as the horses, passing, know before you do. A child possibly, certainly two or three barking mongrel dogs for which the horses, heels are ready—they having grown up perhaps truly in the yard with the children and the dogs and knowing their ways. A few hens, a flock of turkeys—many a horse will swing round before the terror of that black army—a goat, or a wild little loose pony to go a part of the road with you. So you ride through the country in truth and the country is with you all the way, with all its uncertainty and the training that that gives. When you never know what you will come upon round the next corner, your mind keeps alert and in sympathy with the horse you ride, and his fears or lack of them. There is all the difference in the world between such riding, and hacking on a well-trained horse down a tidy lane where you know what you are going to meet. It is strange, seeing that they are brought up with them, how many Irish horses hate the sight of goats. After many a struggle to get past these, there is a feeling of triumph when that quick sense and eye miss the long sad face and

horns looking over the hedge, and you have got by without any trouble.

So many Irish memories—I had almost said all that we treasure and want to remember, but perhaps not quite all—are associated with horses and that life of which the horse is centre. A point-to-point, a race in which someone rode, the green and gold course of Punchestown framed in the blue Wicklow hills. The Horse Show on a day when the sun shone, and two people now old were young.

And people grow old so beautifully in Ireland that no one would remember how long ago it was. Not they themselves, certainly (and to be sure there are no dates in Ireland and I will give none. And people who were 'girls' are 'girls' always and 'boys' the same, if they do not marry. Evidently it is only marriage that ages you and takes you out of Tinnan-Oge). A run on a still November day of brown country and brown bare trees with just a touch of purple from the hills above, and two horses and their riders who were close together all those miles. A moment of fear at a ditch perhaps, a sudden exclamation as the horse slipped, before he recovered himself. That was how a girl showed something that brought the sun from behind the hill for the man riding with her over the same brown country as before (the sun was only there for the two of them), and so they ceased to be girl and boy in the Irish indication. And they are now grandparents and their grandchildren hunt their ponies over the same country when they come home for the holidays and ride them at evening into the stable-yard, where the old groom, who refuses to retire, waits to hear all about it.

That sound of a tired horse coming into the yard at twilight, or, later perhaps, under a winter moon. The sound—is it of oneself or of someone else, these memories being timeless ?

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—of a rider getting down stiffly—or a tired girl just dropping from the saddle into the hands that catch her as if she were a baby—standing for a few minutes talking as one talks in a stable-yard at evening, a warmer, friendlier sound than the few necessary cold words that suit the chilly hour in the morning when one is starting. And so, in through the yard door and up the stairs to the library where there is a fire piled high with turf and wood, and glowing, and tea. Afterwards a look at the horse in his stall, a word with him, as he turns his head from the manger, his luminous eyes deep with peace and content, a caress which shows that he and his rider are of one mind—the children never omit that. And they are rich children indeed who grow up to the delights of Irish country life as their heritage.

The yards are not very tidy, as a rule. The farmyards beyond overflow into them, as the life of the yard and the country generally, wanders into the house through the door which is always open. And no Irish servant ever thinks of objecting to the mud brought in by dogs' paws and muddy boots. Those who are in charge of the stables have the Irish dislike of monotony and doing the same thing every day and—except for the necessities of feeding and watering, which, of course, are sacred duties to a groom—they do not do the same thing every day, unless their employer has married an English wife, when, more from hospitality and courtesy than for any other reason, they fall in with her ways. They give themselves a vast amount of trouble naturally, but I think they prefer that trouble to the killing of some spirit in themselves, which would surely die, if they were to perform their work with efficiency and monotony. It breaks up much of the hardness of life when you can on occasion do the thing that is nearest and easiest at that moment, however much further and more difficult

it is going to make your next task, of which you do not think, no Irish person having the provident temperament that considers to-morrow. To-day is enough. And only by concentrating on it, can one live and enjoy to-day.

And so you will find in your own yard, probably, that when you have had one stall carefully cleaned out and fresh straw spread for the dogs, one of the cart-horses has been put into it temporarily. (Which means that it must all be cleaned out again, if you have such ideas !) And when you have had another stall prepared for a horse, you may find a couple of sickly calves in it, just put there for the night. And so the work must be done again, next day.

There are, of course, tidy yards in Ireland. I know some of them, belonging to rich people, or to English people living here, and beautiful they are with their red and green painted stable doors round them, the entrance gates to match, and the little ornamental trees in tubs of the same colour. The horses who live in such yards, put their shining heads over those doors and look at you with dreamy eyes. It may be a day of summer and they are wondering why they are in, instead of being out in the fields, standing knee deep in the rich grass under a shady tree, swishing off the flies with their tails. That is, as a rule, their summer occupation.

And, sunk deep in it, they have forgotten apparently that they ever had any other. The horse that you hunted in the winter, sharing with him that experience that while it lasts—like love—shuts out all the rest of the world and all other experiences, standing under the summer trees, will lift his head to look at you with cold, lovely, unrecognising eyes.

It is only a trick, of course. You have been friends, so close, so much of one mind, that it is embarrassing perhaps

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now to remember or think of the intimacy. And so, like Millamant: 'Let us be very strange . . . and well bred . . .' And they look across the grass at you with their lovely cold eyes, into which the peace of the fields and the chill of summer dews has come now, and turn a beautiful shoulder to you and go back to their grazing.

Those kept in through the summer for summer riding, the most sociable of all occupations, change their characters subtly but in a different way. If you should seek the best companionship in the world with a friend of your own mind, and time to talk, and that necessary key to unlock the tongue and make talking easy, you would choose summer riding. You start warm and peaceful, on a horse as kind as the sunlight—although there were bitter winter mornings when he seemed as cruel as the wind. There are no blowing branches or creaking ones over your head, or sudden swift shadows to make a fresh horse shy from one side of the road to the other, for which possibility you have to be on the alert all the time. (There was a March day when we rode up a hill past a cottage where they were spring-cleaning. And in their cleaning they had taken the rugs across the road and spread them out on the hedge. I saw what might happen before it happened and it did. The wind came just at the right moment and, slipping under the dark rug spread on the sunlit hedge, lifted it as though inside there were a monstrous thing alive. I was riding a wise horse fortunately, for the next thing I knew was that something had hit me somewhere and that the little grey head of my companion's mount was between me and my horse's head.

'I am sorry,' from the rider. And we were disentangled and rode on with no harm done.

Only late that evening, going home after a long ride and tea on the way, my right knee suddenly began to ache, and

at last we had to walk our horses home, I propping my knee up on the saddle. After a few days' rest all was well.)

But these things do not happen in summer. The horses know the rules of the game. Summer riding means magic of early mornings, with dew on the grass and the gentle sunlight playing through the trees and about the horses' ears, as different as possible from the chilly early morning riding of autumn or spring. Or it means, better still to my mind, riding after tea, down some deep lane which you choose because the flies are much less bad there, and the honeysuckle and wild roses brush your coat as you pass, and as you walk the horses, with a loose rein (talking), they will seize the chance to stop and take a mouthful of something sweet from the hedge.

Such riding and such a relationship between horse and rider is like love without passion. There is no danger in it. Nothing could happen to you on a day of summer, riding a horse as gentle as the air, lazy almost, only too willing at the end of a long gallop up a sloping hill to stop when you have had enough of it. After the storms and thrills and excitements and danger of great hunting days, one might be very glad in the full summer of one's life—all passion spent—to go only summer riding in the peaceful sunlight with a friend. But that is as one is made. And there are some for whom that would be dull and not living at all, as dull, as peaceful, as a good safe marriage founded on wisdom and friendship, not on the agonies and ecstasies and generous and reckless folly of passionate love.

For those it is worth it to go hunting still, facing the fences and banks and stone walls, even if with a cold heart at times, as it is worth it to risk the whole of a tranquil existence for one stormy illuminated moment of intense living. And after a green quiet summer, spent like the horses, out

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on grass, they feel the thrill of that intensity of living stir in them again, in September, when the horses are brought in, and on some golden morning which summer still holds back from autumn, they go cubbing again.

That is a pleasant half-way world, a novitiate for those who might hesitate to take the full plunge and final vows of a hunter, who, once dedicated to that cause, may never be a free man or woman again. One can pretend merely to be taking a morning ride, and when one has had enough of it one can turn round and hack back to breakfast. And one has seen as—strangely—in no other way can one see it, the full beauty of the September countryside.

So, with a gentle gradualness one may make friends with the horse one is to hunt later. To be put suddenly on an unknown hunter, on a cold winter morning, is painful naturally in every sense. There is much similarity between that relationship of horse and rider and the relationship between a man and woman. The delicate moments as you ride out, together, but still strangers, chilly and apart in spirit—in everything except that one idea that you follow together, and because of which you are united for the day, for the hunting season, for life.

And then with movement, the terrible chill is gone, and you are warm and warming to each other. And before an hour is gone you are of the same mind. (If you were not, you would have parted company long ago.)

I went cubbing for the first time in Southern Irish country, on a morning of late August, when white mist had followed a night of soft rain. The mist lifted in places to show a sky of rose, and against it, once, a procession of cattle moved across a field with a strange unreality. The roads were wet with soft mud and long gleaming puddles, the hedges still asleep under a veil of gossamer. We rode for a while beside

a brown river which I still remember, lovely and dreamlike at that hour. It went away from us, busy on some errand of its own. Over a bridge, the road wound between low walls of grey stone, woods, and past a gap in them, through which a house looked, a long grey Irish country house grey still with sleep and peace.

The Meet—a few people and a few horses—was in a valley with bracken-covered hills either side. On one side the hill rose sharply above the road, the other, the ground and a cart track sloped through bracken again, down to the river—the same river we had seen earlier—then climbed the other side through woods, and, more steeply, to a curve against the sky.

The mist was lifting a little. Presently, but not yet, the sun would break through it. Meanwhile a horseman, half-shrouded, appeared riding towards us from over the far side of the hill and pulled up in a gap in the hedge and sat waiting, looking our way. In the mist he was like some figure of legend. So the figures moved about me, heads and shoulders—mostly shoulders as we went down to the river. Identity was lost and did not matter. It was a moment of immunity from life and from the problems that must inevitably be caused by the fact that one is oneself, and so one must deal with that fact. Now one need deal with nothing, except one's pulling horse—if one could—to keep him back from charging the others, from slipping and stumbling on the loose stones of the river. We had no identities. We were just figures in legend, close to each other and apart—with no problems except these immediate ones which took all our time and thought and blotted the others into non-existence. Dimly, I began to realise, as we splashed through the water—it was brown below us, beautifully white flecked—why people hunted and gave their

lives to it—even people who had no liking for killing cubs or grown foxes any more than I had—and so escaped from life.

We escaped, splashing out of the river again the other side and, the fresh horses taking their heads from us, galloping up the steep hill through the bracken. It was rain-wet and mist-wet and the drenched smell of it filled the air as we broke it down. The shoulders ahead of me disappeared at the top. My horse followed them through a gap into the wood. A path showed before us, narrow enough between the tree trunks. We took it, at what seemed to me terrifying speed, striking branches as we went, or they striking us. The ground below was Heaven under a horse's hoofs, deep and soft and rich with the accumulation of many years of rotting leaves sinking into the most exquisite mud. The wet leaves here smelt as strongly as the bracken. As we galloped at that mad speed on such a path, I bent my head before the branches. Lifting it I saw that the sun had come out from behind the mist and was just stealing, still veiled, through the leaves into the wood.

There was an open gate at the end of the path. Two gateposts, and against one of them my left leg was swung with a crash that I can still hear. My boots must have been good, for I never remembered it again. My horse only knew that the chestnut ahead of him was getting away, and I was a passenger as we went up the wall of the hill into the mist—but sunlit now—where a group of motionless figures waited.

All the morning the mist played its lovely tricks, lifting and falling. Out of it came a herd of black cattle with a bull in their midst, to stare at us with soft wondering eyes, blowing out their white breath on the air. Below us was a gorse-covered hill in which the business that had brought us



here—or some of us—was going on. When the sunlight came, the hound puppies who were learning their job, flashed beautifully brown and white as they came out of the gorse and strayed over the hill, and were called and brought back by the whip. We waited for a long time by that covert. In and out of the mist the horses moved or stood still as well-trained hunters should, their riders motionless, wrapped away in their own thoughts in a world of their own. But there are few well-trained hunters in Ireland on such occasions and more of them are young horses learning their job like the hound puppies. Oh, I began to know why people hunted, why they came cubbing—even when they didn't like that part of it. Sometimes a horse got impatient, was walked a few yards and swung round again, and stood, so that his rider might see between his ears what was happening in the gorse.

A lot of things were happening—now as the sunlight came, the dark green thorns shone and glistened and there were silver webs across them—as shining, as bright, as lovely, as the webs spun about our own lives, making us prisoners—here and there the dark touched with a gold bloom. A red muzzle showed for a moment between the bushes and vanished again. To our left there was a low white cottage with bright blue turf smoke rising above the thatch. It looked very comfortable and as if people were having breakfast within. From it, or from somewhere, a man in ragged clothes appeared with a stick and a red mongrel dog who got mixed up with the hounds and might easily have been mistaken for the fox.

But I saw even better things between my horse's ears, looking farther. Down the valley and over the other side, the mist cleared from this view as though it had done that on purpose for me, for it still covered the hill behind. Across

the valley were bright green fields edged with grey stone walls. And the green was brighter because of the grey shapes of the cocks of the last after grass standing against them. The cocks were bordered with magic as the sun touched them and as Monet might have painted them—still half asleep with the sun just beginning to wake them. Beyond, there was a rich plain of many-coloured fields, stretching away to that land that tells its own story with its name—the Golden Vale. And above it, guarding sentries, the bright blue line of the Tipperary mountains, with Keeper Mountain high among them.

While they were busy in the gorse the country came clearer and the haystacks emerged from the green fields that were their background, as though they had come to ordinary life from some still painted picture. The morning was wakened fully by the sudden crying of hounds—so clear, so loud, that it must waken the world for many miles—that sound that has such sharp ecstasy and agony in it and so mingled that one cannot tell whether they cry for joy or pain. The magic hour was over and I should never hold it again—until perhaps next year on a first cubbing morning of white mist with the sun breaking through. Is that the only way to see the country and to possess it for one enchanted hour?

So I know, too, why people go hunting, even people like Siegfried Sassoon who can't like killing foxes any more than I do, and who wrote of the Limerick Hunt, after hunting with it a few times when he was stationed in Cork for a brief period during the War, that it had restored his faith in 'his capacity to be heedlessly happy.' And it is not so easy and is getting less easy in this post-war world, to be heedlessly happy.

Irish country life holds that possibility still. If you love

country and the feeling of a horse under you, how could you feel anything but content, galloping over such fields—there is even a spring in the turf that you do not find elsewhere—taking such jumps, a soft, curved, kind little bank—not as kind as it looks, and slippery if the rain has been on it?

A horse bred in this country knows how to manage it and tells you so with a flourish as you go up to it. And when he proves it beautifully, with a little triumphant kick of the hind feet that replaced the others so neatly as he took off into the air again, you share his delight in his own grace and skill. And going away across the next field at greater speed, the rider is wrapt round in the warm triumphant feeling of the bank behind him, even if ahead of him lies the stone wall.

So unlike its name, this jump, characteristic of some Irish hunting country and most characteristic of Galway—although you find it in Tipperary and in Cork as well. There is a part of Galway that is just small fields intersected with stone walls, made with the stones that they took from the fields when they were making them possible for pasture or tillage—and not very possible, I think, then. People who hunt here must at times imagine that they are on a see-saw, for they land only to take off again over the next wall and then to see another, a few yards ahead of them. Those walls have never heard of mortar and all the stones are loose, piled with some skill one upon the other. And if you should touch the top one with sufficient force, the whole wall would come down behind you with a soft crumbling noise, which, as I have heard it, is a strangely comforting sound as you go on away from it. In the country where the walls are only occasional, one has a certain beauty seen at the top of a sloping field, the long grey line of it against the sky. So that it seems as you gallop up the hill that, taking

it, you will jump right into that sky. A gate, too, frames a pale winter sky and cross-bars it, and it is not as brave a thing as it seems, to take an Irish gate, for they are not the firm gates you find in England. These, you can see from a long distance away, lean as they stand, and have only to be touched with sufficient force to fall and lie flat before you.

That mixed country, for those who have an eye for it, is the loveliest of all—little hills, deep valleys, with overflowing rivers winding through them, a stretch of brown bog always visible somewhere, bright blue hills on the horizon—for however much it rained this morning the sun is more likely than not to come out some time during the day. And if the sun did not come out, between the rain there would be moments when the hills came towards you, leaning close as if they loved you, and then they would be richest and softest green and you might lay your heart and head against them and want no other pillow for either.

There was a day when, towards evening, they ran five miles or so through such country. They had been thinking of going home when the Master turned in over the tumbled down wall to draw Davoril Wood (with Davoril House, burnt in the Troubles, a sad beautiful skeleton and ghost, watching them across the overgrown park). It was only an off-chance that there might be a fox in that once famous covert, but the chance held, and hounds went away at once, as fresh as if it was morning. With the light beginning to fade, they were lost amid the woods and trees, and one hunter was left alone in that strange atmosphere of the past.

Splashing about in the mud at the edge of the little overgrown plantation, that had been made long ago by a Davoril coming back from the Grand Tour, he would not have been surprised if he had been joined by ghostly horses and ghostly riders, who must have drawn this covert and splashed about

these woods and park long ago. Coming out of the demesne over another fallen gap in the wall, he saw figures on the road shouting and pointing, and caught up with the living Hunt, leaving the ghosts behind him. Over the little fields they went, jumping more stone walls than they could count. Banks and ditches too. There was one that might have taken less handy horses by surprise as it certainly took their riders. A double with a ditch either side, a low wall on the top. And they were all over it and ready for the next ditch with a wall above it. And in the air, prepared for the deep ditch the other side, found a drop from the top of the wall only of half a dozen inches or so, which was disconcerting.

In the twilight the hounds, showing a little weariness at last, straggled up a long gentle hill, and, going over the top, vanished from sight as if something had swallowed them. There was a quarry the other side, in which the fox had gone to earth, and well he deserved it. That long sloping hill which leaves one country behind, keeps its secret of what lies the other side. So that horses and riders, galloping a little slowly and straggling like the hounds they followed, came suddenly over the edge of it and saw below them the whole thirty miles length and three miles width of the lake, and the great many-coloured plain to the left of it, and the distant mountains making a circle round them. It was just the hour before dusk fell and the rainy sky had broken in the west to the long streak of yellow that comes so often at twilight. It made its own reflection in the lake, which elsewhere was still and grey, and the vivid colours of the Ormond plain and the mountains softened and fused as though a grey veil lay over them. Down below in the valley the little grey country town was beginning to turn on the lights from the Shannon.

Sitting on that ridge and looking about them, the last

riders began to remember how far they had come from home. One of them had hacked to a Meet and was going to hack back and that was thirty-six miles without hunting at all. The gallant little horse that had carried him with a heart as keen and joyous as his own, all day, had a streak of the Connemara pony in him which accounted for many things, great hardiness, an indifference to comfort, as great as that of the Connemara people who have never known such a thing, wonderful cleverness with his feet over those surprising jumps that never take him by surprise. And an unconquerable spirit that, at the end of the long ride home under the winter moon when it had risen, made him shy dutifully at the black shadow the gate-post threw over the silver, as they rode through it to his stable ; although he knew very well what it was. He is a gentleman too, showing no feeling of the unfairness of it when on the way home he is put for a few minutes into a cold stable with an empty manger and left there while his master has warmth and comfort for a few minutes and a brief glass of refreshment before taking the road again, out of the town, and across the bridge of the Shannon, from Connaught into Munster. Still the little horse will trot with intervals of walking, refusing to be tired even after such a day. And the road that night might have lured him on, for it was silver with the moon, and the trees throwing black patterns of delicate lace work across it. When they went across the wide bog that supplies the turf for all that neighbourhood and which is a hive of business with men and carts in the turf-cutting season, the moon was in all the black bog pools and touching the walls of a little cottage out in the middle of it. There is a point soon after this where the road turns right up a hill and over a hill, and there is the lake and the Ormond plain again, and both seem to belong entirely, every inch of them, to a man who

rides this way at night after a hunting day that can't have been less than fifty miles.

With this thought, it is here that a man not accustomed to singing otherwise—except in his bath—bursts into song and whistling as he walks his horse down the hill. There is a river that just touches the road at the point where a man must sing if he knows how to, or even if he doesn't. The river makes its own presence known, even without the moon to catch the water, and a singing voice cannot drown it. But in any case a horse knows that it is there. He will slow down imperceptibly and just turn his head that way, indicating that he has need of refreshment too. But so delicately is the hint conveyed and with such good breeding, that it may be ignored if his rider chooses.

After such a day, all seems surprisingly well with the world. And the problems that mattered yesterday have been left behind on the wind. And a man who has ridden fifty miles and taken such jumps that no one—sitting by a fire—would believe, and only he and his horse remembering, and their memories, holding so many, getting a little confused—in the stable munching the evening feed of oats, so well earned, or by the library fire—that he might be doubtful himself if an unbeliever were to scoff, so perhaps he'll say nothing about it, blinking by the fire, except that it was a good day.



## IN HARLEY STREET.

*In London lies a curveless street,  
 The houses watchfully austere ;  
 No windows here  
 With stock displayed the strangers greet,  
 All as eye-shunning nuns discreet.*

*Inscribed on every panelled door  
 In letters trim are single names  
 Of wide-spread fames,  
 Of risen healers three or four,  
 Or of the rising half a score.*

*Like bees enclustered here they hive,  
 Their work all one in divers ways  
 Throughout their days ;  
 Along this street's straight length they strive  
 To keep the ethereal spark alive.*

*The sum of mortal ills they hear,  
 All fleshly tribulations laid  
 On man and maid ;  
 They grapple with the gales of Fear,  
 And into port the wrecks they steer.*

*By them the springs of Joy are fed,  
 Earth's simplest melodists they prove  
 To anxious Love :  
 They bring again a freedom fled ;  
 They halt Ambition's heedless tread.*

*They probe the secrets of despair ;  
Like sudden sunshine, Life's reprieve  
With one they leave,  
And bid another stoutly dare  
To dodge awhile Death's outflung snare.*

*Just as of old the ailing came  
About Bethesda's pool, to-day  
They come this way,  
The heirs of agony and maim,  
Diseased, distressed, torn, worn, and lame.*

*Here come complainants' fuss and fret,  
The trivial ache, the tedious tale,  
The coward's wail—  
And strength, faith, patience that have met  
All evil and will triumph yet.*

*Here are the wardens of mankind,  
And all mankind they pass in view  
As judges too,  
But each with unemotioned mind  
Against Life's enemies aligned.*

*Behind these windows all the day  
The anguish and the quest are known  
To them alone ;  
Victors or vanquished, they obey  
Unceasingly the warrior's way.*

*This is the street, the street of Pain,  
To which the suffering world must come,  
Vocal or dumb :  
It leaves in hope and Death's disdain  
Or battling on in vain, in vain.*

*This is the quarrying-ground, the pit  
Wherein with direful strokes is hewed  
Man's fortitude,  
Where terrors, pities, mercies flit  
And, soul-enthroned, the splendours sit.*

GORELL.

## OLD ITALIAN RITES.

BY MARION STANCIOFF.

### I

#### THE SERPENT SAINT.

IN the mountains of Abruzzi, not far from Sulmona, is the village of Cocullo, in which a festival takes place on the first Thursday in May each year, that is anthropologically and religiously of profound interest.

On the day of the feast the small town is full of pilgrims, come on foot or muleback over mountain tracks from distant villages in order to obtain protection against, or cure of snakebite, hydrophobia, and toothache. The local Saint Dominic who dispenses these graces antedates his more famous namesake by half a dozen centuries, and very little appears to be known of him except that he worked miraculous cures of these ills. Here and there in the crowd one sees boys and men carrying grass snakes twisted around their wrists and everywhere pedlars selling charms against toothache and hydrophobia and snakebite. The charms are either twisted bits of iron or long strings of cotton to wear around the wrist. In both cases it is legitimate to assume that the former are summary representations of snakes, while the latter are perhaps also snakes, or perhaps, the sacred 'filets' of antiquity. The many colourfully clad pilgrims flock to the church where high mass is to be said at eleven. Before mass begins many of the peasants cross the church on their knees to the statue of the Saint (a modern plaster statue of a black-clad, bearded monk, with a reliquary

opening in his chest and a horse-shoe in his hand) and rub their serpents, enclosed for the purpose in little white bags, their strings, or other charms, and even clothing against it. Some go to a little bell fastened on the church wall facing the saint and seizing the cord in their teeth clang the bell as a preventative against toothache.

The dome and apse of the church, badly wrecked by an earthquake in 1913, still bear plaster reliefs of biblical scenes, in all of which snakes play a part, and in the four angles of the dome are tablets bearing scriptural quotations (Isaiah and Luke, etc.) concerning power over serpents. In the scene (apse) of the casting out of the first pair from Eden, God is pictured as brandishing a serpent menacingly at the transgressors. I am told by a friend who witnessed the feast twenty years ago that at that time the altar itself was covered with writhing snakes throughout the mass; but this has since been forbidden by the higher religious authorities. Certainly when I witnessed the ceremony (1935) there were no snakes on the altar, but the sermon was full of reference to them. The cheerful-looking parish priest, obviously enjoying himself, expatiated at length on the amazing thaumaturgic and intercessory powers of his saint, saying he was undoubtedly the brightest star in the celestial constellation, with which his audience seemed emphatically to agree.

Immediately after mass the saint's procession began to form inside the church. All the statues belonging to the church took part in it. First came a fine early-renaissance cross. Then a statue of St. Nicholas, then St. Agatha, with her breast on a dish, then an eighteenth-century statue of Mother and Child, formerly also draped with snakes, I am told, in a great blue cloak, looking surprisingly like a Mater Matuta, then came another cross, then a priest under a kind

of parasol of eighteenth-century brocade, carrying a reliquary which I am told contains a tooth of the Saint. Then came two fine-looking girls in Sunday clothes carrying on their heads baskets gaily decked with pieces of stuff and red paper roses, each containing two great flat round cakes, with a hole in the middle and sprinkled with sugar. Then at last came the Saint himself. He was carried by four men (while all the other statues had been carried, Abbruzese fashion, by women), who stopped just beyond the threshold of the Church. At this moment a number of men and boys who had been waiting crowded round the statue, and began to hand the live, though apparently apathetic, serpents through the halo, through the horseshoe he held in his left and through the crook he held in his right hand, making this look like a caduceus; and round and round his feet and through the rococo decoration of the base on which he was carried, they twined the writhing slipping creatures. One of the snakes was discovered to be dead and was therefore hastily thrown away. One or two slid off and the crowd scattered looking down at their feet and laughing; the truants were caught and flung around the Saint once more.

At last, when all was ready, the procession started off, with the relic, the cakes and the serpent-covered statue as the centre of attention and twining up the steep little street reached finally an open place at the top of the village. Arrived at this point the saint's face was turned toward a spot on the other side of the little valley where two experts were letting off fireworks in his honour. This was the climax of the feast, and after escorting the saint back to the church, where the serpents were removed, the peasants scattered to go back to their homes, taking their snakes with them, some keeping them, some releasing them in the fields. We were told that the cakes were divided and given

to the boys who make a speciality—which some told us was a hereditary monopoly—of catching the snakes for the feast.

## II.

## THE MARRIAGE OF THE PODESTA AND THE TREE.

Before describing the ceremony of the Tree-Marriage, I must insist that it is surrounded with an atmosphere of embarrassed yet obstinate jealousy by those who regularly attend it, which increases the difficulty of gathering information as much as it increases confidence in its authenticity.

Having discovered, thanks to much persistence, the date upon which the feast is annually held—May 8th—from a stranger residing in Vetralla, we received a telephome message on the 7th to the effect that the feast had not been held for many years and that it was useless our coming on the morrow as we would find nothing. We chanced it, however, and went to the place which our 'outsider' informant had indicated. Three kilometres from Cura, by Vetralla, in the midst of a large and obviously ancient oak forest stands the little Passionist Monastery of *St. Angelo*. It was built in the first half of the eighteenth century on the site of an earlier chapel and above a *grotto* on a small hill. These facts and the dedication to that anonymous spirit 'St. Angelo' point to the antiquity of the site as a cult-centre.

When we arrived, at about eight-thirty, the guest-room of the Monastery was already packed with peasants—who had come from all over the surrounding country-side on mule and on foot, refreshing themselves with bread and red wine which they bade us share, while they shouted and sang and made merry. At the bottom of the cypress and box (the latter attaining in some cases about three and a half metres) avenue which leads down from the monastery, we found a circular clearing in the forest around two large trees



(one an oak—not ilex—and one apparently a *beech*?). Each tree was decked to a height of about three metres with *ginestra* and *erica mediterranea*. Upon one of them the axe and fasces of the lictors made of rustic wood was hung, and there were several of the *milizia forestale* about, giving an almost too strong suggestion of continuity through the ages. A table with a gay patchwork cover and a chair had been placed at the foot of the larger tree. The militiamen whom we asked for details said with an air both shy and solemn that the 'wedding' had 'always' taken place, and that until three years ago (that is until 1932) there had been a nuptial mass said under the trees by the priests from the monastery, but that this had now been forbidden; that now mass was said in the church and the 'marriage' took place under the trees after the mass. We asked them their opinion of the ceremony's meaning. One said that it was enacted yearly in order to maintain possession of the forest to the community of Vetralla, and if it were neglected the whole lands would pass into the ownership of Viterbo. Another said it was not this, but that the two trees were married to each other, and that for the marriage to be a 'good' one the trees must be 'mature' but not 'too old.' He said that in a few years one of the present trees would be too old and they would have to choose a new one to take its place. He also said that there was an ancient tree, too old to be married, but to which he seemed to attach mysterious importance because of its girth (it takes six men holding hands to encompass it), and he offered to lead us to it. As it appeared from his account to be some distance away and it was nearing eleven o'clock we preferred to return to the church where high mass was about to be sung.

By this time the crowd had swelled to about a hundred people, part of whom squeezed into the little church, while

the younger part remained under the 'betrothed trees' to play various games. As soon as the Podesta, accompanied by various local notables and by a notary, had arrived—by car—mass was begun. The Podesta was festively received and assisted at mass seated upon a decorated chair, and then received communion very solemnly. Immediately thereafter he led the way down to the clearing followed by everyone, young and old. It was now twelve o'clock. The Notary sat down under the larger tree and unrolling a document dated 1868 began to read it out loud. During this time the Podesta stood sheepish and blushing beside the table, listening intently to the distinctly uninteresting legal paper—merely a definition of the boundaries of the forests owned by the community and a repetition of its right to these possessions. After this had been read and the mayor had signed it, the Notary said: 'Would anyone like to sign the register as witness of the marriage?' And after some people had done so and a pause ensued he said, '*la cerimonia è finita,*' whereupon the crowd gave a spontaneous heart-felt cry of '*Viva gli sposi,*' and began to dance and shout again. At this point the Podesta, pink with embarrassment, came over to the small group of 'outsiders' saying: 'We now have a simple banquet in the woods and if the distinguished guests would care to join us and drink our healths we shall be very honoured . . .' and then apologetically, 'this is a very old ceremony, and we always have a feast afterwards.' Partly his obvious *verlegenheit* and partly lack of time caused us to decline the invitation to this wedding feast and so we learned no more—if there was anything more to learn about this curious ceremony.

Perhaps the most striking thing about it all was the contrast between the elaborate ritual of preparation and the dry poverty of the document actually read, proving, it seems

to me, the aetiological origin of this document as a purely 'rational' substitute for a genuine marriage ceremony of magic significance to which recent generations have lost the key, without, however, losing entirely the sense of the mystic necessity in its performance.

### III.

#### THE SANTISSIMA TRINITA.

(Each year on the feast of the Holy Trinity peasants from the Ciociaria Lazio and Abbruzzi go on pilgrimage—to the number of about thirty thousand—to the rock *Sanctuary of the Trinity* above Vallepietra.)

Darkness had fallen over the sober magnificence of the mountain landscape before our caravan reached Vallepietra. The tired mules had to pick their way between innumerable figures that lay sleeping all along the narrow street. Every corner and cranny held a sleeping form; propped against houses, bent double on doorsteps, leaning against one another, prone on dangerously narrow parapets, or simply flat in the dust of the roadway, which seemed by the sanctity of the occasion to have been mysteriously purified.

Those of the pilgrims who were already on their way back from the shrine had decorated their heads with paper flowers of the brightest colours imaginable, chiefly vermilion and cyclamen pink threaded with scraps of tinsel, and mixed with them waving plumes of greeny white grasses, and some held staffs that broke into garish blossom at the top. In the uncertain light of the few street lamps, the sleeping-flower-decked heads looked Polynesian almost; the spectacle was fantastic as a dream and shared the peculiarly intense reality of dreams. The church was full of sleeping and praying women. We watched them a while, admiring the splendid ease with which they did both; and as we stood

there we heard a loud report. In an instant all those women were on their feet looking toward the door and shouting : 'È venuta, è venuta, è venuta la Santissima Trinità,' their voices vibrant with joy. We streamed out of the church with them, and down the steep street which was now crammed with intensely wakeful people, to the edge of the village where men were letting off fireworks.

From here a dark hill beyond Vallepietra became visible to us, woven with a moving zigzag pattern of golden light. Slowly a procession of candlebearing priests and peasants unwound out of the silent night into the brightness and noise of the village street. As they came close we saw that they bore a banner upon which were painted three figures, exactly identical, dressed in red and blue robes and holding three open books in their three right hands, their three left hands raised in blessing. The entrance of the banner into the village was acclaimed with redoubled fireworks and united cries of : 'eviva, eviva, eviva la Santissima Trinità.' After the banner came a large cross, Christless, just a figuration of two rustic trunks, crossed and twined with a vine, but made—for lightness I suppose—of tin, moulded and painted. There followed another banner of the Holy Trinity, this time the peasants dressed entirely in white and sitting in a semicircle instead of a row, without the books, but with a Lamb, an Eye in a Triangle, and a Dove to distinguish them.

Then followed a strange group. About twenty girls, ranging from infancy to maturity, wearing shabby white dresses and veils, came slowly forward, each one bearing in her hands an instrument of the Passion. The nails, the rope, the whip, the column, the robe, the crown of thorns, the lance, were some we recognised. One child had a light fixed on her head, but we could not find out what it meant ; and one of

the older girls was draped in black, instead of white, to represent the virgin. Another cross followed and there came peasants carrying torches and candles, and then the rest of the crowd flowed in behind, merging with the procession and the whole town took up the chant '*Eviva, sempre viva le tre devin Persone* etc.' to a strange rather mournful tune.

It was past midnight now and we had over three hours' walk in front of us next morning, so we retired to the beds we had engaged in a well-to-do peasant's house. Leaving orders to be called at half-past two we fell asleep in our surprisingly clean and comfortable rooms. But through my sleep, which seemed to go on for ever though it lasted less than three hours, I kept hearing bursts of that haunting refrain '*Eviva, Eviva la Santissima Trinità*' . . . There was something both restful and exciting—truly refreshing—in this unconscious knowledge that throughout the night prayer was being kept uninterruptedly at the same pitch of exaltation.

They were still singing when we started off in the dark to walk to the Shrine, and all along the rough path during the three hours' climb we passed little groups singing the same refrain. Presently the dawn came and we saw the summit of Monte Antore—the highest peak in that neighbourhood—grow red, and beheld for the first time the objective toward which we climbed. We were enclosed in a deep narrow valley, that widened out at the farther end where it was closed by a great wall of a mountain. About threequarters of the way up, a narrow shelf cut across the rock and to this the thousands of minute figures scattered along the paths were all converging. As we drew nearer I could hear, beside the pounding of my heart from the climb, roars of '*Eviva*,' and could see the crowd swaying along the narrow ledge above.

I did not reach it until after six o'clock, but it still lay in the shadow of a mountain on the east. The dense crowd was struggling to get to the little flight of steps leading to the shrine. This was a shallow cave hollowed from the rock and protected in front by a wall from which a small iron balcony projected, about three yards above the ground. We struggled for some time to get near the steps, but it was impossible, and we retired, discouraged, to a rock some distance away, for fear we should be pushed into the ravine by the over-energetic Carabinieri who were supposed to be keeping order. This was the only intervention of organised authority and yet the whole crowd from beginning to end was notable for its order and dignity. 'An argument in favour of a theocratic society' as a member of our party remarked.

We succeeded after about an hour in getting into the tiny chapel. It cannot have been more than five metres square. Above the altar a sheet of glass was fixed against the rock which reflected the light of the candles in its dusty surface almost hiding all trace of the painting which it is its function to protect. We peered at it through the iron cage which surrounds the altar, trying to discover the period of the painting, which we had to be content with assuming to be of Byzantine type.

As I was staring up at the picture I became aware of a strange sound close beside me. A kind of gurgling and grunting followed by a raucous cry. Then I noticed a group of peasants a few feet away. A big youth knelt, clutching the bars that surrounded the altar, and behind him his family, all making gestures of supplication. An old man drew some coins from his pocket and threw them on the altar where they fell with a clink on the others already heaped there. The big youth wrung the bars yet more insistently

and the grunts grew more stringent. It was only then I realised that the inhuman sounds came from the muscular throat of the peasant youth. A bystander explained that three days before a dumb man had been miraculously cured there, so this family had come full of hope that their son too would be cured. Just at this moment, however, the Carabinieri came in ordering the church to be cleared for the '*Pianto delle Zitelle*,' or 'Maiden's Lament,' which is the climax of the festival. For a moment the dumb man's grunts reached a higher key, he wrenched at the bars as if to wrench consent from Heaven, his family bent in renewed intensity of prayer; the grunts became almost words, we distinguished the syllables '*par-lar*' in the inchoate rush of sound that came from the thick lips, and for a breathless instant hope hovered in our hearts. Then the Carabinieri tapped the old man on the shoulder. In an instant the whole group had come out of their exaltation and crossing themselves they began to melt away; the youth gave a last howl and a last shake to the bars and then descending to simple work-a-day ways humbly kissed the irons he had been tearing at, and with eyes resigned and serene stepped silently out of the church.

We were so shaken by this scene that it was several moments before we noticed that we too had left the church and were standing on the steps outside looking out over the heads of the crowd gone suddenly quiet. Then we heard faint singing in the distance; but a different song this time, a strange cadence with a break in the middle and a sharp fall at the end. It grew steadily stronger and soon we saw the '*Zitelle*,' the white-clad maidens of the night before, debouch from the rocky path that they had followed, like ourselves from Vallepietra. They came in slow procession along the edge of the cliff while the silent multitude pressed back



respectfully against the rock. The girls still bore the symbols of the Passion, and as they approached singing their plaintive song we saw that they carried something else, they had not borne the day before. It was a bier on which lay a plaster statue of Our Lord with bleeding wounds and scattered with purple flowers. They came up the steps beside us and into the Church where they deposited the bier, and then stepped out on to the little iron balcony where the Bishop of Anagni was awaiting them. The first girl raised up the big wooden nails she held and sang, always in that queer broken cadence 'We are the nails that pierced his hands, Woe is us, woe is us . . . ' and after her verses were finished, the next girl sang 'I am the lance that pierced His Side, O woe is me, woe . . . ' and so on until the instruments of the Passion had all confessed their sorrowful part. Then came the Magdalen whose song was the most moving of all and then the Virgin sang and then Martha taking our Lord's Body from the cross. The most curious thing about it was the way in which the rhythm of the lament was broken after every single verse by the crowd shouting in unison (as if it were a response, though nothing could have been less related to the song): '*Eviva, Eviva la Santissima Trinità.*'

Just as the last verses of the lament were being sung the first ray of sun reached our end of the rock-ledge. That field of reverent heads, bowed to receive the bishop's blessing that ended the ceremony, seemed to take fire; each of those many thousand crowns of paper flowers flared out in a sudden glow of clear pink, or scarlet or yellow, each of those thousands of waving grass plumes received a soft halo from the sun, till the whole mass of human beings seemed to have brought forth from the rich soil of their enthusiasm this extravagant crop of supernatural vegetation. There came a final more than ever heartfelt roar of '*Eviva la Santissima*

*Trinità*, and then the crowd began to break up, and it was as if all those exotic flowers were being ploughed under. We watched the dissolution of this beauty for a moment and then regretfully pulled ourselves together and with many backward looks started down hill on our way home.

Neither the scorching sun nor the excitement nor lack of sleep seemed able to check the pilgrims' enthusiasm. The whole way to Vallepietra we overtook little groups singing the song of the Holy Trinity; and at a bridge we came to, whence one could see the Sanctuary for the last time many of the people stopped and picking up big stones threw them into the stream as a simulacrum of the sins they would be rid of, while they invoked the name of the most Holy Trinity.

The day before we had seen people crossing another bridge on the way up—between Arcinazzo and Vallepietra—on their knees and conjectured that a primitive water-cult may have been the pre-Christian root of this ceremony.

We were careful, however, throughout the festival to come to no conclusions except those immediately warranted by the facts before us. For it is temptingly easy to make Adonis-Attis parallels, but it is also dangerous. We had been told, for instance, that the grass plumes which the pilgrims wore were cultivated in little pots and then allowed to dry like the gardens of Adonis. But the peasants I asked said the grasses were wild and grew near the Sanctuary. There is an unscientifically hasty credulity in many folklore fanciers which inevitably leads them astray. 'The Golden Bough' is an easy one to get hanged on, particularly if we go about Absalom-like with a mane of long theories to entangle us.

*Bulgaria.*

## THE FIRST SWALLOW.

BY PETER FABRIZIUS.

I AM the first Austrian who set foot on English soil after the resignation of the late Federal Chancellor of Austria, Schuschnigg.

That was on March 11, 1938. It was about 7.20 in the evening; we were sitting over our evening meal and the wireless happened to be on: it was that lucky chance that led to everything that followed.

The programme was suddenly interrupted and we heard a voice we knew—Schuschnigg's voice—saying those last words which were translated and printed in the Press of the entire world, except in the Press of the country in which they were uttered. There, they were never published.

The voice told us the whole thing had been falsified from start to finish, that he had had to succumb to force. The final words were, 'God help Austria.'

For a little while we sat stunned. My father stared unseeingly in front of him. My younger brother looked at me. My mother, who had never broken down before in her life, was crying softly.

'This is the end,' I said. I got up and went to my room to pack my things. I had decided to clear out at once, give up my position and my home and leave my ruined country. I knew there was no more room in this country for a man who had always frankly written what he believed to be right and who intended to go on doing so. A country where books are burnt is no place for a man who may want to write just that kind of book himself. Besides, I was not

at all sure that the new lords and masters might not discover something that was not to their taste in what I had already written ; in any case, I did not want to risk it. So it was clear to me that I should have to go out into the world as a pioneer, make a new life for myself and, if I was successful, get my family to join me later.<sup>1</sup>

'Mother,' I called through the door, 'would you telephone to the Western Railway and ask when the next train leaves for London ?'

As I went on with my packing I could hear my mother's voice on the telephone. 'Nine thirty-five ? Oh, that's too soon. When is the next . . .'

'That's all right,' I called to her. 'Get Father to call me a taxi. Here's the key of my desk ; you'll find some English money I've had ready for some time. Would you get it for me, please ?'

In a few more minutes my packing was done and the taxi was at the door. 'Good-bye, Mother,' I said, 'I don't know when we shall see each other again. But when I've got across the frontier I'll see how I can manage to get you all away.'

I kissed her hurriedly—there was no time to lose. My father, who was seeing me off, told the chauffeur to drive to the Westbahn. There were crowds out in the streets and we had difficulty in getting through them, though we were in a hurry to catch the train. 'Better go by side-streets even if it means a longer way round.' My father promised the driver a good tip if he got us to the station in time for the train.

Chattering crowds. Everyone hurrying about aimlessly and shouting.

'Have you got money on you ?' my father asked.

<sup>1</sup> *This I have now managed to do.*

'Yes, sixteen pounds and two hundred Austrian schillings. One is allowed to take that much money out of the country.'

Was it still allowed, though, I wondered? But I kept my doubts to myself.

The taxi pulled up abruptly. We were just coming out of a side-street to cross a main thoroughfare when the way was blocked by a procession. It was an organised contingent of motor-cyclists in precise and orderly formation—only half an hour since the débâcle. The procession was headed by a motor-car with two men in it, one at the wheel and the other holding aloft a great red banner with a glaring white swastika.

That is the only swastika banner I have ever seen. The display of such emblems had been forbidden in Austria for some years past. Occasionally small swastikas had been found here and there in defiance of the ban, but they had always been removed from the streets at once. And now all of a sudden here was one, huge, blatant, waving in the evening breeze and lit up by the street lamps, held high by a frenziedly gesticulating man. It seemed to break into the night like the roar of some escaped beast of prey.

The only Nazi flag I have ever seen in my life. But I shall never forget it. I had pulled up my coat collar, and we waited in silence, with the engine running, for the procession to pass. It took a long time and I kept looking at my watch.

At last there was a short space between two sections of the procession. The driver shot through just in time.

It was very late when we got to the station. There were only a few people about. But inside the booking-hall there was a small crowd of people who had hurried away, like me, in good time. The booking-clerk was only just opening the shutter.

Two young, shabbily dressed suburbanites with swastika armlets were hanging about the hall, but they did not seem to have any official duties.

About twenty people queued up to take tickets. They did not talk much, but their voices shook with excitement though everyone was trying to appear calm and unconcerned. The clerk was more flustered than any of the travellers. Evidently he himself had only heard the message over the wireless a few minutes ago and was not quite sure how he ought to behave. Tickets to issue unexpectedly to twenty people—that was a pretty complicated business, as in Austria tickets had largely to be written out by hand and the fare calculated. As a rule people booked for foreign travel at the agencies and not direct at the station. Only seven minutes till the train was due to leave.

‘Plenty of time,’ I remarked coolly to my father. But inwardly I was itching to thrust aside the two men who were ahead of me in the queue. In due course I received my ticket and paid my fare to London.

Leaning out of the carriage window, I exchanged a few more casual words with my father. It was nearly dark down there where he stood, but he kept his hat well down over his eyes. ‘Send us a telegram when you get to Basle,’ he said.

An ear-splitting yell came from the open space before the station. ‘Heil Hit-ler ! Sieg Heil ! Sieg Heil ! Sieg Heil !’ There were hundreds shouting it, thousands. It sounded like the howling of wolves. The yelling rose and fell and rose again like a tide. ‘Sieg Heil ! Sieg Heil !’

The train pulled out.

‘Sieg Heil !’ howled the wolves. ‘Sieg Heil !’

The train rolled on, my father’s figure disappeared, but the yelling voices still sounded in my eardrums. Those

shouts were the last sound I heard in the city where I had spent my childhood and thirty years of my life.

Besides myself, there were three men in my compartment, all travelling separately : a fat man who passed most of the time sleeping—or apparently sleeping—in his corner ; a little dark fellow who gave the Hitler salute out of the window each time we passed through a station ; and opposite me an elderly man with refined, artistic features. Perhaps he had been shell-shocked in the war, as his hands were very shaky.

No one said a word. I took down my suitcase and got out all the certificates, letters and documents that might possibly, for any imaginable reason, lead to trouble. There was nothing of a political nature, but all the same I tore all the papers into fragments and got rid of them in the lavatory. Then I took the badge of the Fatherland Front out of my button-hole and threw it out of the window when no one was looking. I expect there were a good many of those badges on the railway line that night.

The elderly man smoked continuously. He had a violin-case with him and no other luggage whatever.

We stopped at a station. Here there was one man in complete S.A. uniform with the Storm Trooper's cap and brown shirt. There were also a few men wearing armlets running about and assiduously greeting one another with 'Heil Hitler.' The little dark fellow went to the window and gave the Hitler salute ostentatiously.

There was ice on the line and two train officials were busy hacking it away. 'A lot of ice about,' remarked one of them, 'sure to be a breakdown.' 'We shall never get beyond Salzburg,' said the other. 'The German troops are



marching in there at two in the morning, and that will be that.'

The elderly man was drumming on his knee with trembling fingers. He had no cigarettes left. I realised it was fear that made him tremble. I gave him a couple of cigarettes. He took them with such fervent thanks that I might have given him some costly present.

The train went on. There was no light in the compartment. The old man began to moan, his face buried in his hands. He thought no one could see him. I offered him some aspirin, and in the dark he pressed my hand with an embarrassing show of emotion.

It was a horrible night. In the early morning we arrived at Innsbrück.

. . . . .  
A man with a Nazi armlet came into our compartment and asked for our passports. 'Where are you going to?' he asked the old man. 'To Zurich—I am giving a concert—I am a musician—there is my violin—you see I'm giving a concert—in Zurich—my violin—a musician——' He kept repeating the same thing and was obviously terrified out of his wits.

The Nazi returned all our passports and went.

That went off all right, we thought.

The door opened, the Nazi came back accompanied by another in a leather coat. 'Which is the musician?' asked the newcomer.

My *vis-à-vis* turned a shade paler, and I could hardly breathe for suspense. He got up, trembling. 'Yes, musician, violinist.'

'All right, all right. Take your violin. You've got to get out.'

With shaking hands he reached down the violin case, while the second Nazi turned to the sleepy fat man in the other corner and asked to see his passport again. He looked inside it, then said, 'You, too, get down your luggage and come along with me.'

So now there remained only the little dark man who kept on giving the Nazi salute, and myself.

The Nazi turned to the little fellow and demanded his passport. I got a glimpse of the name—a typically Jewish one; and I guessed all his show of saluting had been nothing but a ruse.

'You must get out too.'

Now I was the only one left. The official barely glanced at me; he did not demand to see my passport again and went out. What the rules of the game were I had no idea, and I have never been able to find out.

For an endless time I sat alone and the train did not move on. What could be happening to the other three? What would happen to me? Who was the old man with the delicate hands? I wondered if he would still be alive the next day.

After an eternity, the train started on its way again. It was a tremendous event. I was still alone—none of the others had come back.

We were passing through the Tirol and I made my farewells. That was my country. How could it be that some stranger could come along and simply say, 'Get out'?

Good-bye, St. Anton! Good-bye, Vorarlberg! Good-bye to school, youth, friends. Good-bye, Austria—gone for ever—'Ostmark' from now on.

The door opened and the elderly man came in. I drew

a deep breath and welcomed him with my eyes. He said nothing and settled himself in his old place.

The door opened and the fat man came in. He did exactly as the first had done.

The door did not open a third time.

A few more stations, then Customs examination, foreign exchange examination, passport inspection. But this time it was old Austrian officials on the job, not Nazis, and everything was done briskly. Then came the frontier—Buchs—we were in Switzerland.

. . . . .

I was dog-tired. Below on the platform were railway officials in unfamiliar uniform. *Swiss* officials.

Swiss officials!

It was an indescribable sensation. We rushed to buy Swiss newspapers and change our last Austrian money. Then the train rolled on into Switzerland. And the engine drummed out 'Switzerland, Switzerland, Switzerland!'

My old friend smiled. 'Please tell me,' I said softly, 'who are you? Aren't you really a musician?'

He drew out his passport. It bore the name of a painter, a master of his art, famous throughout the world.

'What did they do to you?'

He made a weary gesture. 'They didn't find anything.'

'Had you any valuables on you?'

He smiled again and produced a pocket-book full of picture postcards—ordinary picture postcards. Reproductions of his paintings.

'That is my fortune,' he said. 'That is all I have brought across the frontier.'

'And the skill of your hand,' I added.

He selected a card. 'In memory of an unforgettable

night,' he wrote on it, and gave it to me. I shall always value that memento.

That fat man was wide awake now. 'They took me down to the police station,' he told us. 'I have a wife and child in Vienna, and I had every scrap of my money with me in notes,' he named a very big sum, 'here in my shoe. I had worked fifty years to pile up that fortune, and I meant to use it to start a new life for my family abroad. If they had found it I should be in a Concentration Camp now, not sitting in the train.' He gave a rather silly laugh. 'But they didn't find it, though they made me strip to the skin. I'd thrown the money away before. The entry of the police station was fairly dark and I stopped behind a pillar to tie up my shoelace, see? All my money is in an envelope propped up behind that pillar. The charwoman who finds it won't have to work any more for the rest of her days. They didn't find a thing on me. I got rid of every bit of money. What a stroke of luck!'

The great painter left us at Zurich.

At the French frontier I shared out my luggage, as most of the others had hardly brought anything with them and did not want to look too much like refugees at the outset.

Nearly all of them stopped in France. As far as I know there were only two men besides myself who went on to England; if there should be a fourth, I am willing to admit I am wrong.

One of the two others, a solicitor from Vienna, broke his journey at Paris, meaning to go on later by air. The other, an actor, came on with me. He was very anxious when we disembarked at Folkestone in case he should meet with difficulties and not be allowed to enter the country. Although in those days Austrians did not need a visa for England, still they had to satisfy the Immigration Officer as to the intended

length of their stay and so forth. Besides, one had to have a certain amount of money, and the actor had practically none.

And so it happened as he had feared. My fellow traveller was sent back to France. I was the only one left.

Thus it came about that I was the first swallow—the harbinger of an endless stream that is still flowing in.

When the train pulled in to Victoria Station, the long journey was ended. But the other, longer journey was only beginning.

#### SWORD AND MASK.

*Once war was glorious, a most god-like game—*

*Locked ranks, fierce hoofs and swords, a flag unfurled ;*

*Men fought for fine ironic things like fame,*

*Or Helen's face, or rule of all the world.*

*Now, for dull tales about democracy,*

*I must prepare for something bestial, low,*

*Bitter and unrestrained—O God, there'll be*

*No beauty left, no light : and yet I know*

*The drums will beat, the men will march and sing,*

*And I, deluded fool, will think it war,*

*And with high thoughts mock death and suffering,*

*Drunk with the smell of wine drunk long before :*

*Pray Christ in mercy keep me drunk, that I*

*May shout ' Saint George for England ' as I die.*

MICHAEL RIVIERE:

## MATER DOLOROSA.

BY J. GEDDES.

SHE had brought Ellenora up to hospital only a week ago—it seemed years, but it was only a week ago, and her money was nearly done. Well, she would have to go back now, she couldn't put it off any longer.

She had always paid her way and had a little over beside—a little put by for Ellenora's wedding. That was all gone too, now; ah God, do funerals always cost one so much more than weddings?

Yes, she would need to go back to the country now, but without Ellenora, and that seemed so extraordinary, so impossible a thing, a strange terrible mistake, not really so, not without Ellenora—that would be leaving the whole of her life behind her.

Yet always Ellenora had been a thing apart, something removed, elevated, poised, always a little above her. How she had loved that child—loved her with her whole soul, her whole body. Yet always she had felt that little fine remoteness, as if she had borne a princess under her plain heart and never guessed it. Well, Ellenora had loved her too, thank God—there was no doubt of that; in spite of all her drab grey earthiness, Ellenora had loved her.

All the spring flowers, denied herself, blossomed for her, in the child's heart—why, she was a flower herself—and the noise, the din of the streets, died away; soft as a little wild river, fell the voice of Ellenora . . .

Someone pushed rudely against her; it didn't do to get

thinking in the crowd. Everyone was so hurried, everyone had such important business, everyone had a place to go to. Yet when a big bus blundered up close to the pavement where she stood and she saw Hyde Park Corner written on it, she suddenly climbed in; or did the people just push her in before them? Well, at any rate, it would be a rest and only cost a penny or two; but she couldn't sit down after all, the bus was quite full, but had to stand swaying about and holding the leather strap very tight in case she should fall against someone, some important person, who really meant to be in the bus, who really was going somewhere.

She took her ticket to Hyde Park Corner. A park was a place where you could sit down, yes, even though it were cold, no one could stop you sitting there, surely? It seemed a long way, a very good twopence-worth. The bus was so crowded she could not see out at all, and when she looked down she saw a pair of small high-heeled shoes and they reminded her of the last thing she had ever bought for Ellenora—a little pair of slippers. They had seen them the last time they went to Rochester together and the child had taken such a fancy to them. They were gay little shoes with buckles and high red heels and, of course, Ellenora had never had high heels before—just plain serviceable black strap shoes and these were not at all suitable; yet though Ellenora was always a good child when denied a thing she wanted, something that had got into the child's face of late, a little dim foreshadowing, a little fear, had made her buy the slippers for her.

And how pleased and proud she had been, trying them on every now and again and wrapping them carefully away in their white tissue paper and laying the box on the top shelf of the cupboard, going back to look at them every



little while. The night before they had come up to hospital she had put them out on top of the kitchen dresser.

'When I come home,' she had said, 'I'll see them there first thing and I'll dance in them, won't I, Mother, won't I?' And in the child's voice there had been that little catch of fear again and she had suddenly come behind her chair and put her arms round her and laid her cheek against her hair. She could still feel those cold little tears that had fallen on to the back of her neck and rolled down behind her collar . . .

. . . People seemed to be always finding her in their way, and suddenly the busman, with an unpleasant smile, put his face close to hers and said cynically :

'Strap 'anging a 'obby of yours, ma'am?' And when she looked around her there were crowds of empty little velvet seats. She sat down hurriedly in one of them, but again in an instant the busman was at her, more suggestively sarcastic than before : 'You got out two places back, didn't you? 'Yde Park Corner, if I remember right. Twopence, please.' And struggling nervously with the clasp of her shabby black purse, she gave him two more of her precious pennies and escaped from the bus.

Outside there was no park to be seen anywhere at all. She must have gone long past it. The streets here were bigger and wider, grand-looking streets ; she felt she should almost apologise to someone for being in them at all. But quite suddenly, right in front of her, was a golden glorious shower of cowslips piled upon a barrow, faintly fragrant and sweet.

She stood in front of them and drew in a timid breath of their sweetness. She put out her hand and touched them, lightly— Oh ! sweet, oh lovely. But from behind the flowers a girl appeared, with cold threatening eyes.

'Now then,' she said sharply, 'sixpence a bunch and 'ands off the blooms, if you please.'

She moved hastily away. Oh, for gentleness, for a little kindness; couldn't one's heart get a little comfort anywhere?

What had the nurse in hospital said she had just given Ellenora?—'something to strengthen the heart,'—but the heart of little Ellenora had been too tired—needed no strength now. It was she who needed it; that was just what she needed now, 'something to strengthen the heart.' The cowslips might have done it; if one held a soft moist bunch close, close, it might bring kind sweet things near, gentle shady places where one could go quietly away and hide, hide from eyes that were cruel, that accused. One meant no harm, no harm at all.

. . . That girl that had come to the cottage door, what had she been collecting for again? S.P.C.A. Yes, that was it. Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Why wasn't there one for prevention of cruelty to humans, prevention of cruelty to hearts? How they hunted one, wounded one, these cruel, cruel humans; struck one down while one stood on the very brink of despair.

She must go home—she would go home, if it were not for those little waiting slippers, she would go home at once. But just now she was so tired—so tired—she must find somewhere to sit down, if only for a minute or two; and as she looked up she saw that there was a great grey church in front of her. Its door was a little open. It seemed as if it were with her last ounce of strength that she climbed the four stone steps leading up to it and went in.

The heavy door swung softly to behind her, shutting out the noise of the street; in here there was so much space, it was so dim, so quiet, no one would notice, would look

at one here at all. There was a great stone pillar in a little dark side chapel, and a chair behind it that she crept on to, and there she sat, at first quite still, hearing nothing and feeling nothing, only relief at just being able to sit there—still. In a little while, though, she began to hear voices singing from far away at the front of the church, where the light fell softly from the warm stained-glass windows, and saw that a few shadowy people were gathered near the distant altar; then one voice, a clear low voice that rose alone in the immense silence, and words that fell slowly, gravely, across, it seemed, all time towards her, from very far away, from very long ago. They fell on her mind with only a vague half comprehension, rested there, were laid away as it were for future use—time enough—‘not forsaken’—‘courage’—‘strength’—ah, what was this, ‘with strength, with strength in your soul,’ not just your heart—your soul, that was it, that was it! She looked quickly up, and from a painting hanging on the wall there looked down on her, eyes, full of a great, a deep compassion. She had forgotten such tenderness could be; here at last under those gentle eyes one could cry, cry at last . . ., but first she wanted to pray. She slipped off the chair on to her knees and laid her head on her arms; there were no eyes but those loving ones to see her now, yet no words came, not for a long time; then at last:

*‘Jesus, tender shepherd, hear me,  
Bless Thy little lamb to-night;  
Through the darkness be Thou near me,  
Keep me safe till morning light . . .’*

It was Ellenora’s prayer, every evening as a little child she had said it, pressing her small bent head against her breast . . . ‘safe till morning light . . .’

By and by she would go home and put the little slippers

away, with strength, with strength in her soul, but first she would rest here and have a cry, leaning one's tired head up against the great grey pillar—one could cry at last, one could cry one's poor broken heart out. And the music rolled and swelled, grave and lovely; it seemed as if it bore one's sorrow with it, rose with one's grief and laid it, changed somehow, beautiful, a flower, at the little feet of Ellenora, at the feet of God.

### MALARIA.

*I lie and quake, while peal on peal of thunder,  
Stifled and dim, from out the forest rolls:  
Murmurs like these have tortured countless souls,  
And stricken hearts innumerable with wonder!*

*It is as though the Dark were torn asunder  
By winds of sorrow, while a deep bell tolls  
The Young to tears; but blesses and consoles  
The Aged with dreams to cancel every blunder!*

*Surges that break on some unmemoried shore;  
Tread of vast armies; tireless hurricanes;  
Dances delirious; groans of giant cranes;  
Dead hands that beat a never-opened door;  
Bugles that peal . . . all these, no less, no more  
Than blood athrob in fever-tortured veins!*

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Nigeria.

## STUDENT DAYS IN GERMANY BEFORE THE WAR.

BY ROSE FYLEMAN.

A FEW years before the Great War I was in Berlin, studying singing. I made friends with two young Canadian girls who had come over in charge of a chaperone—a young widowed artist—for a year's work. One of them was studying German, the other the violin.

English 'Misses' were in great favour in Germany in those days, and we all had lots of admirers and attention. As one of the two girls—now the happy mother of a flourishing family of eight, out in Winnipeg—remarked to me on a recent visit to London, 'It was almost a miracle that none of us married a German!'

But in a general way we didn't like the attitude towards women of most of the men we met, particularly not that of the man in the street (literally).

Being young and light-hearted, we thought it not unamusing to have constant flattering remarks flung at us by passers-by—'Mouse-feet,' 'Charming child,' and so on. But it was less amusing to sit in a tram-car and be steadily stared at by the young man opposite from the beginning to the end of the journey.

I am still proud to remember the successful defence that I used to put up against this particular annoyance.

It consisted in turning on a slight, but sufficiently noticeable squint, which I was able to maintain without effort for quite a time.

The only drawback was a resulting slight distortion of

vision which made it a little difficult for me to see exactly how disconcerting was the effect produced on my vis-à-vis. But I could see enough to know that the plan worked.

It was even more unpleasant to be followed at night, especially as the street doors of the big apartment houses were locked at a certain hour—eleven, I think it was—and one had to let oneself in with a gigantic key. There was no electric light in the houses where the cheaper pensions were situated, and it was before the day of electric torches, so that it meant crossing a dark entrance hall and literally feeling one's way up a long staircase. If by any chance you were coming home unaccompanied you risked the horrid possibility of some stranger trying to get in with you. This once happened to me, and I was so frightened that I never again came home late by myself during the two years I spent in Berlin.

Even in the houses where I visited I found it difficult to fall in with the accepted attitude towards the male members of the family. They were always waited upon, had the best of everything, and were served first at table. I once demurred at being expected to go down the garden to take a cup of coffee to the eldest son of the house, who was lolling down there at his ease with a book. I don't think his mother ever forgave me.

Army officers were held in particularly high esteem. They certainly looked very smart in their grey capes, and kissed your hand and clicked their heels rather engagingly, but they walked along the pavement as though they were the kings of creation, and less exalted people had to make way for them. Officials of every kind were disagreeable. A police officer once came to our flat about a watch that had been stolen from one of us, and actually asked what we would pay him to get it back. He also became rather

unpleasantly affectionate when he found that we had no man with us. Fortunately one of us thought of ringing up a lawyer friend, who promptly offered to come round at once. The police officer, realising what was happening, became apologetic and made off hastily. We got the watch back.

There were very gay parties in Berlin in those days, especially the fancy-dress functions.

I remember a whole flat—a very large one—being arranged as an underseas kingdom, the invitations being issued as from King Neptune and Consort. We were received by the royal pair, seated on an elaborate throne; the ceilings were hung with green gauze to represent the sea above our heads and there were all manner of fantastic sea-shows. Another party was arranged as a country fair and was quite charming. There was usually a cotillion dance at those parties. A trolley would be wheeled in, laden with little bouquets, and these the men presented to their partners. You had only one turn round the room with each man; he then flung you hastily into a seat and rushed off for another bouquet to give to another girl. The more bouquets you got the more of a success you were, and certainly we English girls had no reason to complain on these occasions. It was great fun to walk home to your pension accompanied by a little bevy of cavaliers laden with flowers. I remember a frosty night when all the bouquets were frozen stiff in the icy air. They looked lovely; but the next morning they were all brown and dead.

Berlin at Christmas-time was wonderful. At many of the street-corners there were miniature forests of Christmas-trees standing upright on the pavement, and in the squares there were rows of small booths gay with toys and bright decorations. Elaborate and beautiful fairy-tale scenes were



exhibited in the windows of the big stores, and, best of all, on Christmas Eve every flat displayed a lighted Christmas-tree in one of its windows, the curtains being drawn aside so that one could see the trees from the street. The effect was enchanting. And inside the flats the Christmas-eve ceremony of the distribution of gifts was equally delightful. For every member of the household, and for every guest as well, there was a pile of lovely presents, while in addition to the more substantial gifts everybody had a 'gay plate' heaped high with good things—nuts, apples, crystallised fruits, marzipan, chocolates, almonds and raisins, and the delectable Nuremberg *Pfeffer-kuchen*, brown and spiced and amusingly patterned with sugar.

These celebrations went on in the Jewish houses where I visited as well as in the non-Jewish.

Alas and alas . . . I know a Jewish family in Hamburg where, when the recent anti-Semitic campaign started, the young housewife, feeling that her pride would not allow her to continue the Christmas celebrations, explained to her little boys that there would no longer be a Christmas-tree and a party. And one of them, yearning after those bright festivities, said to her—'Mutti, *must* we be Jews?' . . .

The three Canadians and I lived in various successive pensions and finally settled in modest rooms in the back part of a small block of flats.

Our landlady, Frau Kessel (Kettle), was a cross little old woman who looked rather like a witch in a fairy-tale. We three younger ones were all dark-haired, and when we were dressed up in our best to go out to a party, she would coldly inspect us and then remark—'German gentlemen admire blonde ladies,' a so-to-speak prophetic endorsement of a phrase that was later to become famous the world over.

I was studying singing under a very well-known teacher

of the day—Etelka Gerster. I was the only English girl among her pupils and continually had my coldness flung at me, also what was looked upon as a typically English defect—a lisp which could be detected, so it was said, in the choral singing. I was called by the Gerster, 'The little English girl who wouldn't cry.' The others used to cry when she was in a rage and shouted and threw books, but I just wouldn't. She was the most autocratic person I have ever met. When I ventured to say that practising gave me a sore throat, she replied, 'That is impossible with my method,' and that was that. My alleged stolidity was a great trial to her tempestuous nature. 'Fall in love, *Engländerin*,' she used to say; 'for Heaven's sake have an unhappy love affair. What about Wolff here? He's married; he'll do.' Wolff (the accompanist) was an elderly, singularly unattractive person, and he didn't do!

Frau Gerster knew all sorts of august personages, 'Highnesses' and what-not, and some of their daughters came for lessons. I remember them as invariably blonde and entirely unmusical, but possibly my memory exaggerates these peculiarities.

She never threw books at them, and when the august personages themselves came to see her we were all turned out of the great music-room, with its rows of little gilt chairs along the walls, into the entrance-hall, where we had to wait, sometimes for an hour or more, till the great folk came out.

Once a year, or perhaps once every two years, I'm not quite sure which, the women artists in Berlin gave a great fancy-dress ball and fête. No men were admitted; it was an entirely feminine function. It was a most gorgeous affair. Many of the women came dressed as men—toreadors, Arabs, harlequins and so on, and all the dresses were fantastic and

daring. There were exquisite tableaux, too, and the decorations, which were, of course, arranged by the artists themselves, were original and beautiful.

Frau Gerster always had tickets to give away, and would lend her pupils costumes from her own old operatic wardrobe.

We all had a very good time and enjoyed behaving as idiotically as we liked, and carrying on absurd pseudo-flirtations with extravagant pseudo-admirers. I don't think there were any abnormal implications attached to the function; if there were, I, for one, was entirely unaware of them. The exciting element consisted in the fact that a few men always contrived to get in in spite of the great care taken over distributing the tickets. Firemen had to be admitted because of the flimsiness of the scenery, and some of the firemen were undoubtedly bogus. But if a man who had managed to get in illegitimately was discovered, he was set upon by a crowd of the women and hounded from the building.

In the warm weather I would often be invited by families at whose houses I visited, to join on a Sunday in a country excursion. We would go a few miles out of town by train, lunch heartily at a beer-garden near the station, and spend the rest of the day strolling from one place of refreshment to another and writing 'view-postcards,' on all of which we all wrote our names, no matter to whom they were addressed. I don't suppose we ever walked more than two miles on those occasions.

Since then Germany, at any rate young Germany, has become much more exercise-minded, I know. I don't know whether they eat and drink less; possibly they have to. Certainly, food formerly played a very important part in the lives of middle-class families. One odd characteristic

of Berlin at that time was the fact that there was no generally accepted time for the mid-day meal. It was said that by a little careful planning you could make a tour of your friends' houses between eleven-thirty and six any day, and always find a meal going on. People were very hospitable; there was a tradition that students were generally poor and underfed. I have never eaten such meals as the Sunday dinners to which I was invited in Berlin.

There were always plenty of opportunities of hearing good music. The Sunday morning rehearsals of the celebrated *Philharmonie* concerts were famous, and we were given tickets for innumerable small recitals. You could hear splendidly from the gallery in the Opera House, and the pensions all provided picnic suppers for those who wished to go. The music-students used to sit on the gallery stairs between the acts, with their packets of sandwiches on their knees, and beside them a glass of beer from the unpretentious gallery buffet.

Those were two very happy years that I spent in Berlin. I had no end of fun, and my whole allowance, apart from my lessons, was only six pounds a month!

I went back to Germany many times. It has always been to me a country of beauty and romance, with its fairy-tale pinewoods and castles of enchantment, its toy-box villages, its friendly peasants, its stately rivers and fair cities. I do not think I shall ever see them again.

## THE PEACEFUL ORCHARD.

*There is a subtle anodyne for care,  
 Anxiety, and heaviness of heart  
 Within this quiet acre of my own,  
 Where farm and Forest meet in harmony  
 And, as a sheep-trimmed orchard, coalesce—  
 In part the same as each, yet still itself,  
 And, varied by the Seasons' kindly grace,  
 An airy cloister 'neath the apple-trees,  
 A place for contemplation wholly fair.*

*But not for every man such peace as this—  
 To some 'twere boredom and monotony.  
 Hot Youth, untutored by the handling World,  
 Would let the fragile fabric of this calm  
 Slip from his thoughtless grasp, and fall to earth  
 To crash like crystal dropped by slattern hands.  
 And he, who easy treads upon Life's path,  
 Nought knowing of the fear of poverty,—  
 Who has not looked stark Death between the eyes,  
 Or known the loss of loved ones, and the void  
 Their long mourned absence leaves within the heart,—  
 He, who has only known the smiling face  
 Of Fortune, and has never seen her frown,  
 Could find this simple peace too samely plain,  
 And long, incontinent, for city streets,  
 Bright searing lights, and futile gaieties.*

*Such men shall not inherit this fair Earth,  
For they but lose—in very earthliness—  
Appreciation's heavenly gift, that makes  
All gifts of Earth reflect the light of Heaven.*

*But I, within this haven of content  
Encompassed by a hedge of hazel wands,  
Beech, dog-rose, hawthorn, twined with bryony,  
Through which the eyes, by gentle slopes beguiled,  
In contrast to the Forest's tracery,  
Gaze far beyond the river and the vale,  
O'er chequered tillage, wooded scarp, and lea  
To where, as tho' beyond the utmost rim  
Of this my little world, vague mountain shapes  
Loom purple, blue, or ever changing grey,—  
And, to the East, by mighty trees enfenced,  
Whose trunks, in olden times, were set apart  
To build the oaken walls that held the Seas  
For England:—I, within this kind domain,  
This lot, that falls to me in fairest ground,  
This fruitful field, this goodly heritage,  
Forget the World's temptations and its strain.*

*Enough for me the sunshine and the birds,—  
And who shall watch a bird in flight without  
A sense of thankfulness that he has known  
Such grace, such beauty, and such artifice?—  
The changing skies, the moonlit mysteries,  
The springing blade and budding twig that make  
The morning of the Year, before the flowers  
And blossoms of High Summer's loveliness  
Lead on unto the time of Harvest-home  
And fullness of the kindly fruits of Earth.  
And then—the quietude of Winter's sleep.*

Let me not speak as pontiff or as prig—  
 For, in the beauty of this orchard's peace,  
 Surely a man may learn humility.  
 It shall suffice if I may humbly tell  
 How that each passing day is filled with calm,  
 Giving me time to turn my latest thoughts  
 To things more lovely than the World's affairs,—  
 To plan the sure declension of my years  
 So that I may, when, at the end, my soul  
 Shall pass to regions of untold content,  
 But leave the World unharmed that I have lived,  
 And—if God wills it—by my words more fair.

FRANCKLYN HELMORE.

#### ROOKS.

The rooks are out of their trees,  
 The black rooks are calling :  
 ' War ! War ! War ! '  
 In confusion and anger,  
 Unconscious of their own sorcery,  
 Circling, they draw on the sky  
 The ciphers of Fear.

In murky squadrons  
 They darken the heaven,  
 Fast as alarm they fly—  
 Obedient to what order  
 From what Commander ?  
 By what volition,  
 Reluctant driven ?



Black rooks,  
Distractedly flying,  
Scream in malevolence :  
‘ War ! War ! War ! ’  
When night is near,  
Wheel back to shelters  
In fouled high places,  
Crowded in conference,  
There to croak and whimper.  
Rending among them,  
Like a piece of stripped flesh,  
The red word, ‘ War ! ’

\* \* \*

O Hesper, Holy Star !  
Afloat on western clouds,  
As on a pensive sea.  
Light up our darkening earth  
With your divinity.

HELEN GRANVILLE-BARKER.

Paris.

## GHERGILDA OF SCANNO.

BY HELEN HESTER COLVILL.

### I.

THE effect of big hotels is to make all places alike, and I am told there is now one at Scanno. When the Englishwoman with the paint-box was there in the pre-war days, Scanno was not at all like other places. It was medieval ; a mountain hamlet at the back of beyond, connected with the great world and modern times only by the postman, who daily made the twelve-mile journey to Anversa in a crazy chaise.

At Scanno (said to have been originally a Greek colony) the girls are so much alike you might think them all sisters. They all look about sixteen, they have straight, delicately chiselled oval faces, light brown hair and soft golden-brown eyes. They wear a medieval dress with long dark skirts heavily pleated, leg of mutton sleeves, and silver buttons. They do their hair once a week, plaiting it in long tails, intermixed with strands of scarlet or emerald wool. The tails are wound round the head and crowned with a dark turban called *Fasciatoja*, high and square over the brow, lifted at the sides to show the frills of a white cap. Girls or women, they despise chairs and squat, oriental fashion, on the ground, their knees up to their chins. And, girls or women, they do all the hard work of the place. True, there are men in Scanno, and quite a number of clever little boys who finish their schooling at ten. The boys sit on stone fences and ask each other arithmetical conundrums. The men play *mora* and watch their sheep grazing on the

fine mountain-encircled pasture lands which have made Scanno famous throughout the Abruzzi.

Of course it may all be entirely different since the arrival of the big hotel. I speak of how the Englishwoman found it twenty years ago. She had come from Pettorano, also of the Abruzzi, where the girls with snowy headgear, flitting about the sunny streets suggested white winged angels; in Scanno, especially about nightfall of a rainy day, when she was stumbling down the steep and slippery Via Abrami to Signor Vincenzo's Inn, she fancied she had dropped into some strange Limbo, where the dark figures, with the celestial faces glimmering under the monstrous headdresses, must be those of lost angels from some ruined Paradise.

For a lively walk Signor Vincenzo took his guest to the little Campo Santo under Saint Egidio's Chapel, high up on the steep mountain. There he told her the story of Ghergilda; Ghergilda who among the lovely maidens of Scanno had been the loveliest, Ghergilda, whose innocent life had been sacrificed, not for a friend but for one—

## II.

*'Era zu mese che zu ciuccio raglia,  
Quanno a le prate cantano zu grilli,  
E zu cuculu canta pa la Plaglia  
Faccia fronte alla casa di Pantilli;  
Quanno zi faghi mettino la foglia,  
E covano a zi'nidi zi cardilli;—  
Allora sposar Marietta e Nanno,  
La miglia juventu che stenga a Scanno.'*

*'May is the month of the sun-gold spring  
When in the meadows the grasshoppers sing,  
When the cuckoo shouts from the mountain moor  
Over against Signor Pantilli's door;*

*When the leaves burst forth in the beech-tree wood  
And on their nests the bright goldfinches brood ;—  
Then, then they were wed, Marietta and Nanno,  
The fairest and best of the children of Scanno.'*

So sang young Egidio serenading his *affidata* (betrothed).  
'They must have been just like us,' he said : 'yet  
no ! Marietta I am sure was less lovely than you, my  
Ghergilda !'

'And Nanno wasn't Egidio,' she murmured, feeling the  
rain of his kisses on her ear, and her pillar-like throat left  
bare by the medieval cut of her heavy raiment.

'A year is an eternity to wait,' sighed Egidio ; 'but  
*coraggio* ! By May I shall have bought sheep and become  
rich ; and we will live in the white house, from the roof  
of which you can see the chapel of my patron saint. And  
every Sunday, my Ghergilda, we will walk up there together,  
and pray the saint to give us many babes, all of them beautiful  
and strong, and as good as you, *mia bella* ! And see ! here  
is the *cinquina* all ready ! You may look but you mustn't  
have it till the last time I see you before the wedding feast.  
After that it is yours.'

And he exhibited the gold coin marked with a cross, a  
most sacred token, which Ghergilda touched with deepest  
reverence for a moment only.

'On that day,' continued the '*sposo*' excitedly, 'we shall  
both wear our best clothing, and all our relations will come,  
and each one will give us coins, also with crosses, but not  
of gold like the *cinquina*. The feast must be in May, and  
till then we may see each other daily. But it's very stupid  
that we can be only *affidati* for a whole year, when we  
already have money enough.'

'It's the custom. We must do what is right,' said the

'sposa,' with a little sigh which robbed her speech of its primness.

Ghergilda was stepdaughter of the struggling widow who kept the one little shop in the Via Santurri. She had seven sturdy boys and girls of her own, and Ghergilda was the family breadwinner. Egidio had belonged to the learned little boys who understood arithmetic. In position he was a cut above his bride. His parents were (for Scanno) in comfortable circumstances; and this was lucky because his mother, being lame, could not work like other women, and his father was a gentle, thriftless, open-handed person, who gave money to anyone asking for it, and believed it grew in his pocket by course of nature. Filial piety is strong in Scanno, and Egidio loved father and mother as the very apples of his eye. With help of the facile and kind-hearted Syndic he had been exempted from the usual military service, on the plea that his mother was invalided and he was the only son. The exemption was something of a disappointment to himself, but at this stage of his life Egidio saw everything through his parents' spectacles and never dreamed of questioning their authority or their wisdom.

The boy had known Ghergilda all her life, but not till he was eighteen had it occurred to him that she was different from the other girls—a wonder! a glory! a queen! a star!

'Get me this woman or I die!' he cried to his father; and of course the father in his turn never dreamed of opposing the one fine son who was the very apple of his eye. So the customary negotiations took place, the customary gifts were given and received, and the '*affidata*' wore the betrothal ring. The stepmother crossly impoverished herself to provide the correct betrothal feast, and Orazio, Egidio's

father, looked forward to the wedding supper next May with a childish delight in so fine an opportunity for expenditure.

## III.

Alas ! much can happen in a year, even at Scanno.

Orazio's fine sheep were suddenly attacked by an infectious disease ; the neighbours took fright ; municipal authorities, who seldom did anything but now and then did too much, swooped down like vultures and ordered his whole rich flocks to be slaughtered. He had been spending, giving, borrowing recklessly in anticipation of his boy's wedding ; this calamity to the sheep spelt ruin. Ghergilda's step-mother was greatly displeased, and the relations on both sides informed the '*affidati*' that the wedding gifts of coins, many and fat, were unlikely to be forthcoming.

Ghergilda knelt at her lover's knee, raised her face to his and swore she would marry him with no coin at all in their treasury but the one *cinquina*. She would work for him ! Oh yes ! she would labour day and night harder than ever she had laboured for the seven little boys and girls. She would beg for him in the streets ! The one only thing she would not do was to give him up. Never ! never ! By the Holy House of Loreto ! by Sant' Egidio, their patron saint !

He kissed her, murmuring words of undying love, and Ghergilda was happy ; but Egidio, alas ! was not. More thoughtful than most of his fellows he realised what a very poor prospect he was offering to his bride. Nor was he thinking only of his bride, beloved as she was. He was tortured by visions of his dear crippled mother and his dear gentle foolish father, turned out of their home, living on the charity and the derision of their neighbours.

A week later Egidio, with bursting sobs, confessed to Ghergilda, that their wedding would have to wait. He was going, yes, *going*—to America, that El Dorado of which every boy in the Abruzzi dreams. The postman's uncle had promised an introduction to a brother-in-law, head of a Candy factory in Chicago. The Syndic had offered a donation towards the passage money. Egidio had promised to serve for two years at the Candy factory. He would get rich, he would come home in a later May and be married. He would buy lots and lots of sheep. Perhaps even he would drive the post-chaise to Anversa! Had not the present postman begun by three years in New York? Egidio would speak the American language very quickly. And sums! He had always been good at sums. In American factories—so said the postman—sums were always required, and the young men who could do them were called *clerks* and wore black coats! Yes, that was it! He would come home in a black coat, wealthy; and they would be married. Only not this first oncoming May. *Now* he must go.

'Take me with you, Egidio of my heart,' said Ghergilda, her hands clasped round his arm.

'Ah no, my beloved! Lovely angel that you are, among the wicked men of that savage country evil might befall you. And the *bambini* we have prayed our saint to give us would be awkward in Chicago. It is best I go alone, my Gilda. For two years. *Cara mia bella, bella, cara mia!*'

'But will they *let* you come away in two years?' she questioned, thinking Egidio was selling himself into slavery.

'They will have to. Think you I would abandon my old parents for more than two years?'

'Or me?' said Ghergilda, forcing her dimpling smile.

'Or thee, my Gilda! Oh my dove, promise me you



will visit my aged mother while I am away, and be a daughter to her who has no daughter of her own.'

'I promise,' said Ghergilda.

Egidio went. And all Scanno walked the twelve miles to Anversa to see him off. All Scanno wept. He wept. His parents wept. Ghergilda wept—violently.

Yet after a week or two hope revived in her breast, and again she looked mere sixteen. The young men who had been cut out by the erstwhile prosperous Egidio, began to wonder if now there might not be a chance for one of them.

They did not know Ghergilda.

#### IV.

Egidio wrote almost immediately on landing, a letter beautifully penned and expressed, not easy for the illiterate recipient to read. He wrote again from Chicago. He had work in the counting house department of the Candy factory. His wages were high. The master was a good Italian, but his wife and daughter were foreigners. The workmen and all the other clerks were stupid. Once he (Egidio) could talk their language he would be boss over them all. Boss was a word of the pure English, and meant a kind of king. Yes! that was what he intended to be—king over a strange people in a strange land. And in May of the second—no, the third year—he would come home and be married.

Ghergilda spent hours deciphering this letter. It seemed encouraging and she went about singing,

*'Then, then, they were wed, Marietta and Nanno,  
Fairest and best of the children of Scanno.'*

She bought writing paper and stamp, and paid the public letter-writer to compose for her an epistle to her lover.

She could not afford more than one sentence ; but it told of her great love and endless faith, and her hope of reunion when he had become a great man and a boss.

Slowly the two years went on. Egidio's letters grew shorter and further between. He was so busy. In this horrible country no one had time to sit down and rest. One wore too many clothes, and was burdened by vain cleanliness and laborious high-flown habits. Daily he yearned for his dear dirty Scanno, the green pastures with the sheep ; and his dear idolising mother to whom monthly he sent vast sums of money. And of course he longed also for his own lovely Ghergilda and sent presents of money likewise to her, but irregularly. She was not in need like his crippled mother. She was strong—able to work, as (at Scanno) it is right for women to work.

Work she did. She carried water in a huge copper vase on her head ; she collected fire-wood, piled it on the donkey and led him home, supporting him with her arms lest he should fall in the precipitous miry streets. She played with the stepchildren, knitted, sewed, spun and wove for them. She fed the pig, washed the clothes, assisted at the dye works, baked cakes for the little shop. Every day she visited Egidio's mother, did her chars and ran her errands. The days, the weeks, the months rolled on.

There came a day when Ghergilda, having waited three fortnights for a letter, found that in the interim his mother had received two. The girl was angry and did no charring. The lame woman felt that should this mismanagement occur again Ghergilda must not know. It did occur again ; but the wily mother joined in surprise at her son's silence ; and, with his '*affidata*,' hoped he was not ill.

When the second May had come and two years were

over, Egidio reported that he was now head clerk at a great salary, and had come into another piece of luck as well which would enable him to buy back all his father's earlier affluence. In gratitude for this good fortune he had promised to remain at the Candy factory for two years more. Ghergilda stifled her tears and sat with the old couple sympathising in Orazio's simple rejoicings, and wondering with the lame woman what could be the good luck which had befallen the exile. The lame woman knew, and had been told to break the news to the '*affidata*'; but Ghergilda's charing was valuable, and the cripple held her peace.

The girl was still the beauty of Scanno; but her stepmother told her she was idle, and eating the bread of her brothers and sisters, and she ought to marry the swineherd instead of crying for the fool who had run away from her. To keep the stepmother quiet Ghergilda joined her friend Pepina, who was doing building work for Signor Vincenzo. Pepina also was a handsome creature, and the two girls, tall and proud, strong and straight, with sun-kissed cheeks and shining eyes, brought glory to the new little house which was being added to the Inn. They kilted up their voluminous skirts, mixed mortar, ran up ladders, carried whitewash on the tops of their turbans. Masons and bricklayers used to stop work to admire them, as the Greeks probably admired and were jealous of the Amazons. Signor Vincenzo was eloquent in describing the girls and their superhuman beauty, especially Ghergilda's. Now and then foreign visitors used to stray into Scanno, and Signor Vincenzo, taking them round the village sights, never omitted to point out the beauty, the angel beauty of—Ghergilda, 'fairest and best of the children of Scanno.'

But the stepmother grew more peevish than ever. If Ghergilda—great lazy thing—was not good enough for the

swineherd let her marry the tipsy bricklayer ; and anyhow take herself out of the cake shop and make room for her developing half-sisters !

It was about this time that Egidio's father suddenly died of a stroke ; and his widow wrote to her son in Chicago that she needed him, and he must come back home.

## V.

One day Ghergilda at her rough work, saw the post-chaise arriving with the mails, and bringing strangers—travellers with trunks, foreign trunks. The travellers were three, a gentleman in good broadcloth, a lady with a fur boa, and a baby. The baby was sickly with wizened face and staring eyes. The gentleman was—Egidio. He turned to look at the new house, and his eyes fell full on Ghergilda. Not so soon had he expected to see her, and he crimsoned to the roots of his hair. But he had no presence of mind and attempted no salutation. Perhaps it was wiser so.

She dusted her turban, let her skirt down, dipped her fingers in water, and followed the chaise to the Inn where the horse pulled up. She told herself that the woman with the fur boa was some English tourist whom Egidio was escorting. No. Carrying the child, dragging the lady who was protesting that she could not and would not walk down the muddy staircase which he called a street, Egidio conducted the stranger to his mother's house, through the vaulted doorway, down the thirteen steps, into the dire blackness beyond.

'But, my dear, it's a den !' cried the lady in broken Italian ; 'a filthy loathsome den ! I will not go in—I would rather die ! It's beastly ! I will not go in !'

So much Ghergilda heard before the door was slammed to with a long hollow groan. She went back to her work.

'What's the matter?' asked Pepina; 'have you hurt yourself? Why do you cry?'

Ghergilda made no answer. She was twenty and so far had looked sixteen. Five minutes had turned her into an old woman.

Egidio had married in Chicago—his master's daughter. She had a dowry, and he was given partnership in the business if he chose to stay.

'*Mamma mia*,' he had written in his letter home, 'for God's sake explain to Ghergilda how it is! May Heaven forgive me!'

Almost he had decided to remain permanently in Chicago, when the news of his father's death upset him. Love of his birthplace flamed up in him, and love of his parents if not love of Ghergilda. Exile had become intolerable. To his wife's consternation he announced immediate departure, carrying his money-bags and his son.

'The child can't go without me,' said the wife, though in her heart she thought the infant a bore.

Egidio in his impatience did not contest this point. Let her come if she wished it. He was going home!

Arrived, the burden of years and of the strange land rolled off him. He was a boy again and in his mother's arms.

But the wife said, 'It's a filthy den!' and she cleaned the chair she was offered before sitting upon it, and made insulting comments to the old peasant woman—withered and hobbling, hideously clothed and smelling of garlic—who with sobs had fallen on Egidio's neck, apparently to his solace.

His solace, yes! for he was at home; a boy again, at home and in his mother's arms.

But at night he could not sleep—he was haunted by visions of Ghergilda.

## VI.

The couple did not stay long at Scanno ; the conditions were impossible. Damp and insanitation were fatal for the little boy with the staring eyes. Before the new moon he sickened, died, and was buried in the Campo Santo of Sant' Egidio. It was not the sort of baby the father had expected or desired, but he wept, and the mother's manifest indifference jarred upon him terribly. Almost at once she began asking him to take her to Naples, where she could buy a proper (and expensive) mourning frock to replace the dismal travelling rag she was making shift with. Naples ! The very name conjured up visions of fashionable hairdressers and smart shops. Moreover someone on the liner had told her of romantic musicians at Naples, who nightly sang *Funicoli* from play-boats tossing gently on the moonlit waves of a sea far bluer than the Atlantic. How charming ! How *amusing* !

But—whatever was this horde of horrible people who were flocking into the house—if house it could be called—and saying they had come to cross themselves beside the corpse?—the little corpse laid out in its coffin on view ('on view !'), smothered in artificial flowers and leaflets printed with Latin prayers.

'It's the custom,' explained Egidio ; 'it's to rest his soul and lift him out of Purgatory.'

'Stuff and nonsense,' said the mother.

'It's not stuff and nonsense. It's prayers. It's always done. I won't have it neglected.'

'Stuff and nonsense. There's no Purgatory and I don't care if there is. He was my child and that's enough.'

'But he was my child, too. When he meets me in Heaven, he shan't say I forgot anything due to him.'

'Stuff and nonsense. Just look at that great girl who has come in and is actually *touching* the child ! How horrid ! I suppose she's thinking we'd bury him alive if she didn't interfere ! What business is it of hers anyway ?'

'Go away, woman, and leave me my dead to myself,' said Egidio.

When Ghergilda, according to Scanno custom, visited the little corpse, and very softly touched the tiny shrivelled and darkened head, she remembered how Egidio and she had prayed together for the *bambini* ; *bambini* many, strong like herself, and beautiful as Egidio had been—before he went to Chicago. She said little ; meekly she took up her bleeding heart, her cross, and had no hard thoughts. Claspng her hand feverishly he attempted some futile explanations, but she shook her head and refused to hear. Once indeed she allowed him to kiss her, a good-bye relinquishing kiss, coals of fire on the lips of each. Then she went back to her work at the building, refusing his offer of an income for her step-mother and herself.

The young men of Scanno stared at the *Americana* and said rude things to her. Nor did they resume friendship with Egidio, who had been false to Ghergilda.

'All right ! All right, woman. We'll go to Naples. And I pray the holy devil there to bite off your tongue and stop these eternal upbraidings. Are you never going to believe that *I like* this place ?'

The *Americana* shrugged her thin shoulders.

'Have you ever liked anything I like—except my dollars ?' she said tartly, if not entirely unreasonably.



## VII.

Egidio did not want *Funicoli*, nor shops, nor even an azure sea. His affections were faithful to the rolling, park-like, pasture lands, encircled by barren mountains and entered only by one dark and narrow, winding and mysterious gorge. A cutting, the gorge seemed, through the rocks ; of a surety it had been men's work ; hewn out by giants in the spacious days before history began. How had the giants done it ? Why ? Who were they ? What had become of them ? As everyone knew the spirits of these Unknown still haunted the gorge. They had been turned into hobgoblins. A few persons had seen the hobgoblins. Many had heard them flapping invisible wings, making unearthly screams when they quarrelled over their feasts of carrion—carrion that two days earlier had been one of Orazio's liveliest and best-prized lambs ! It was sacrilegious, idolatrous, *wicked*, to invade the gorge after sunset. Only audacious boys—Egidio their ringleader—had dreamed of attempting such criminal action, punishable as it was by paralysis, even by madness. To the most sceptical it was obvious that the disaster to Orazio's flocks had been occasioned by the presumption of his twelve-year-old son. For Egidio boasted of having twice, positively *twice*—explored the gorge, end to end, after midnight ; and had seen no goblins, nor giants, nor antediluvians ; only three or four of the unseemly birds with wide pinions and bare necks, which lived and nested, unchecked and unstudied, free denizens of the gloomy solitude, and no doubt personating the hobgoblins.

By daylight, what could be more delightful than to make exit from the gorge into the fair green pastures ? To the sheep probably, and certainly to Egidio, this pasture land

seemed the authentic Earthly Paradise. Here all was security and peace, no storms, no enemies ; no need of fold, no need of guardians ; fodder rich and abundant, warmth, shelter, safety. In certain circumstances hobgoblins, inimical to thieves, make excellent shepherds ! The son's memory saw the green pastures still dotted with his father's sheep ; in imagination he saw them also in years to come dotted with his own sheep. What better tribute could he pay to the poor fond and foolish father whom he had loved, than to follow in that father's footsteps ?

Alas ! Egidio himself was not a little fond and foolish. Perhaps it was punishment for his boyish intrusion on the hobgoblins of the gorge !

#### VIII.

London, so say the geography books, is built on the Thames, Rome on the Tiber ; and Scanno is built on the Sagittorio. It is a fussy little river apt to run dry in summer, but at other seasons easily seduced into a condition of unpleasant flood. It rises in the more distant of the two mountain ranges which enclose the Paradise pastures. It hurries through the gorge, issues at right angles to the Anversa road which it crosses under a good stone bridge. All wheeled things and donkey riders or pack-saddle mules, follow this road ; but walkers found it tedious, and long ago had invented a short cut reducing their journey by at least a mile. The short cut, like the Anversa road, has to get over the Sagittorio. The first contrivance was by slippery stepping stones. Later a narrow foot-bridge with a single hand-rail was fixed up. This was now showing signs of wear, but no one worried so long as the weather was fine and the river did not rise unreasonably high.

Three days before the couple from Chicago were to

start for Naples, the American lady, bored to extinction, strolled out to witness the one great event of the Scanno day—the arrival of the post-chaise bringing the mails. As if to spite her, on this particular afternoon there were no letters, no parcels, no passengers, and the chaise drove away almost at once. The lady felt personally slighted. She also went away, stepping disdainfully like a displeased cat, and not noticing where she was going. The morning had been thundery and wet, but now a fitful sun had come out, and as always she felt an extreme unwillingness to re-enter the plebeian homestead of her uncivilised mother-in-law. She wandered on, instinctively following the short cut which led to the foot-bridge and then to the less pretentious part of the town. Fortunately and more by luck than judgment she was on the right side of the river and nearly at her destination, but so great was her distaste for return that she was ready to catch at any straw which could detain her. Joy ! There was an unexpected object on the far side of the stream ! an agreeable surprise ! actually a large, full-blown though out-of-season, scarlet anemone ! the very thing to enliven the rusty black frock which she was wearing in honour of the dead baby ! She was a woman to whom whims were laws ; at once and heedlessly she crossed the bridge and made her pointed four-inch shoe-heels carry her to the water's edge. Grumbling at a few drops of rain she began tearing up the brilliant plant. It was deeply rooted and much less accessible than she had expected. Though she dug furiously with her sunshade—not for her a sensible umbrella—she only made holes which at once filled up with water. She dragged at the innocent flower till its head came off. She stamped on it angrily, and it turned into just mud like the bank which had been its cradle.

By this time it was raining heavily ; she was getting

soaked and ought to be going home. Home ! What a travesty of a word ! Well ! anyhow she had not far to go. Horrible as was the mother-in-law's abominable den of a house, it was in the more decent part of the crowded little town—near the Inn, the Convent, and the one small shop. She just had to recross the foolish little bridge, climb some twenty steps up the dirty staircase of a street, and—at least she would be under cover ! Her flimsy frock was of course ruined. No matter, she had money in her purse and was going to the grand Naples shops ! She climbed up the bank to get to the bridge.

'Signora !' called a voice. '*Signora ! Non andar di la. Prender la gran via. Prender il monte. Andar m'monte !*'

She looked up. Yes, the great coarse girl who did men's work, who had touched the dead baby's head, who was her pet aversion. The creature was making signs, shouting, and hurrying towards the footbridge. Her skirt was hitched up showing her strong legs ; her fine arms, her pillar-like throat were bare, and she was splashed all over with paint.

'What a disgusting object !' thought the *Americana*, making no attempt to interpret the country speech nor to understand the signs. Under no circumstances would she have thought of doing anything recommended by that creature !

The American was naturally stupid. It had not occurred to her that the heavy shower was anything but a nuisance, that the Sagittorio was noisier than usual and was spitting foam hither and thither, that the water was almost on a level with the plank bridge, that the girl, Pepina, going ten minutes ago to her home in the slums, had picked her way perilously by the stepping stones instead of as usual easily by the bridge. Pepina was now out of sight and Ghergilda,

following her, was still far behind. She and the American had the world to themselves.

## IX.

Madonna Egidio as they called her was overcome by panic, not connected with the water. It was her belief that all the inhabitants of Scanno were thieves, and she remembered that she was wearing her diamond ring and had her purse in her bag. The horrible girl was still shouting and still advancing.

*'Signora ! Signora ! Attenzione ! Andar m'monte ! Prender la gran via ! Il gran ponte !'*

'She is going to rob me !' said the American. 'What on earth am I to do ? Oh God ! She's coming ! She's going to murder me !'

To stand where she was on the wrong side of the bridge, on the very highroad to the slums would be fatal. Her only chance was to rush past the assailant before she had got to the bridge ; the lady would have gone in any wrong, any impossible, direction to save herself ! surely Egidio had once suggested that the slum quarter and the slum population were dangerous ?

Trembling in every limb, she jumped on the rotten planks of the saturated bridge. Her pointed heel made a hole in the planks. Her shoe stuck in the hole and came off. Her stocking foot caught in the now exaggerated hole. The stocking tore. It seemed to her that her foot was jammed, paralysed, refusing to move. She screamed ; she staggered, she plunged ; she wrenched her foot out of the hole, she fell on her knees ; fountains of icy water shot up round her on every side. She reached for the hand-rail, it broke in her grasp. Her screams were horrible, and without intermission. Though it was not midnight

she remembered the tales of the hobgoblins ; she slipped, she fell, she rolled into the water.

Ghergilda had however come up ; breathless. She flung herself on the stepping stones, now submerged and a treacherous foothold even for one who knew every item of their possibilities. She clutched at the lady's skirt and gave one mighty pull—not unsuccessful if the terrified woman had not wound herself entanglingly round the deliverer's arms and legs. Somehow Ghergilda shook her off, and gave another heart-arresting pull.

The American, thrown on the bank, struggling like a rat, hurling abuse, sank on the grass, bruised, saturated, maddened—but saved. She crawled out of the Sagittorio's reach, she sat doubled up, she wrung her hands ; she felt for her purse and her ring, she wept with wild accusatory screams.

'Help ! Help ! Oh do come somebody ! Anybody ! That big woman is trying to drown me ! You girl there, can't you see I am dying ? Aren't you going to do *anything* to help me ?'

She did not think of getting up and seeking assistance, not even of raising an alarm. Nor did she wonder what had become of her enemy.

For the effort, the violence, the hurry, had been too much even for Ghergilda. She had overbalanced herself, lost her breath, lost her footing. She had fallen into the spate where it was deepest, where the current was strongest. It was not really very deep, the current was not really very strong. A hand at the moment could have saved her. But the screaming woman on the bank was too much lost in self-pity to give it.

Eight hours later, down-stream, at a considerable distance Ghergilda's body was found, battered beyond recognition.

## X.

Signor Vincenzo thought it would have been better had the *Americana* been drowned in the flood and left Egidio free to redeem his promise to Ghergilda. Fortune refused to let him off so lightly. Years later the postman's son saw him in Chicago. He had inherited the Candy business, was rich, and lived in a fine flat. His wife had jewels, went to parties and had become enormously stout. There was no child except the little one who slept in the Campo Santo at Scanno of the Abruzzi. The mother said, 'Thank goodness !' but the father sighed.

Egidio did not know what to do with his money. Ill-shaved, ill-dressed, stooping, he sat in his counting house consumed by longing for the land of his birth, the people and the Green Pastures of his love. He tried never to think of Scanno. It reminded him, and how bitterly !—of Ghergilda.



### BY THE WAY.

'It really is too bad of them,' remarked a lady whose vivacity belies her many years, as she perused the account of the recent exploit of the dictatorial pair, that heroic seizure of Albania, the existence of which, it appears, was so threatening to the ancient realm of Italy: 'they will give us the trouble of learning geography all over again.' Yes, and of unlearning it also, for it can hardly be thought by any but the immediate entourage and satellites of these two notable men that there is any possibility of permanence about such conquests. Of all the vanities, that of conquest, as all history proves, is the emptiest: it has been attempted age after age by mighty men and small, and never yet has it endured.

\* \* \*

To those who take a superficial view of the discussions and pronouncements of American politicians it would appear that that formidable democracy has been engaging in an endeavour to determine whether it will abstain, even at a financial loss to itself, from all dealings with any warring country that might conceivably lead to entanglements or whether it will make money out of those who, in the event of an outbreak of war, will be the resisters of aggression. That alternative has no particular glory about it and could only lie before a country far enough off and powerful enough not itself to be in obvious danger. But it is only to a superficial view that this alternative appears. In reality there can be no doubt that very seldom in its history has American opinion been so stirred by the barbaric and repeated acts of the dictators, each in violation of his word, each accompany-

ing the act by fresh 'assurances' which, with a genuine, if extreme, obtuseness he really expects will be believed; and this even before the President's momentous and magnificent appeal.

\* \* \*

And now the *London Mercury* gives up its independent life: it has wrought well and its ending is a loss. These are difficult days for any who seek to serve the spirit and the mind; the age is inimical to such service. And yet it is possible that the *Mercury* was too catholic and so could not contrive to secure that continuance of support necessary to enable it to survive the difficulties of this philistine and unthoughtful age.

\* \* \*

A word of commendation for a new venture: Columbia Records have now issued the first volume of *The Voice of Poetry*, that is to say, records of poetry spoken by Miss Edith Evans, to which Laurence Binyon has written a foreword and Wallace B. Nichols contributed notes. This first volume contains 6 10-inch records of short poems from Shakespeare to W. H. Davies, and it is hoped to succeed it by many more spoken by others. A venture to which to wish all success.

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When a very young writer makes so great a mark with her first novel as Myrtle Johnston made with *Hanging Johnny* it is difficult indeed for her to live up to it: and many felt some disappointment accordingly over both her second and her third. Her volume of short stories, however, which succeeded were at all events adequate to prevent any readers from feeling that that first astonishing piece of work was a flash in the pan; it was in many respects a fulfilment of the early promise. Now indubitably with her fourth full-length novel, *The Rising* (Murray, 7s. 6d. n.), Miss Johnston has

written once again a story which has—as was said of her first—‘grimness with its underlying compassion.’ This is a really fine tale of the hopeless strugglings of misguided Irish peasants against their oppressors in the unhappy Ireland in the ‘sixties ; it would have been so easy to exaggerate or be melodramatic, that has been done so often, but it is written with an understanding, a sympathy and tenderness as well as a humour that softens the grimness and makes it all a human and a memorable narrative ; this is a rare and, indeed, beautiful piece of writing that will consolidate and enhance the author’s reputation.

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Just as many a writer has tried—and failed—to make a successful story out of Irish troubles so have many tried—and failed to make an attractive book out of a diary of nature lore. And as Myrtle Johnston has succeeded in the one, so has Tickner Edwards succeeded in the other. Few have known the South Downs as long and intimately as he, yet knowledge is not enough : he brings to his new task *A Downland Year* (Methuen, 7s. 6d. n.) not only knowledge but a delicacy both of observation and phrase that makes this, the latest of his long line of books, a most welcome companion to all who love Sussex : whether to read through—or, perhaps better still—to keep by one’s bedside and read an entry every day, it is, as the sub-title tells, a series of ‘little sketches of the countryside for every day in the year,’ the study of which will much increase any reader’s knowledge and with his knowledge his love of some of the best things in life,—the sights, sounds, scents and lore of the Sussex Downs.

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And how many, too, have tried to write a book of reminiscences of childhood and failed ? I do not know whether it is altogether a recommendation to be told by the publishers

how greatly Miss Irene Rathbone succeeded in work of a wholly different type; her new book might well have been allowed to stand on its own merits—that it could abundantly do. *When Days were Years* (Faber, 7s. 6d. n.) is an admirable recreation of the ever-delightful time of childhood; before we lay it down we are all of us back in the days of our own youth, with Iris, Philip, Bobbie—and last, but not least, the dog, and more no reader could ask.

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Surely and steadily Coleridge is rising to that high place amongst the immortals for which he is clearly destined. Book follows book: to maintain the balance, I note with amusement that a writer of reviews—one of that class of least responsible and most cynical people—has recently described him as ‘the most accomplished parasite of his own or any other age,’ a description as ludicrous as it is obnoxious. We have now in quick succession two notable books—*Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Oxford University Press, 18s. n.), of which most careful and scholarly examination one can only say that one could wish it were not strictly confined to being, as its author, Sir E. K. Chambers, accurately calls it, ‘a biographical study.’ Lovable—and impossible—as Coleridge was it is not for his life’s doings and misdoings that he is and will be remembered, but as the writer of some of the greatest lyrics in the language; and rigidly to eschew all literary comment or criticism is greatly and unduly to limit the interest. Similarly, the other biography, *The Life of S. T. Coleridge*, by Laurence Hanson (Allen & Unwin, 21s. n.), is limited: that is also correctly described as ‘the early years’—and though it is in these that Coleridge’s golden glory shone brightest, it is only a portion of him. The two biographies are complementary and Mr. Hanson’s has the advantage of admirable illustrations—but even with

these two, indispensable as both are to our understanding of this marvellous man, there is still room for a third, a final and a full biography.

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Another, and a very different, man is also the subject of a recent incomplete biography : Mr. W. Watkin Davies has written *Lloyd George 1863-1914* (Constable, 12s. 6d. n.). Why stop at 1914 ? Until 1919 Lloyd George was one of the world's dominating figures and to end just before his greatest period is surely illogical. The biography, written with Welsh knowledge and understanding, is of much interest nevertheless, and by no means as uncritical as its subject would no doubt wish. It will be valuable to the historian and to the writer, when the time comes, of the full biography of one of the most arresting, puzzling, and disappointing figures of our times : meanwhile we can read it with interest—and a sigh.

★      ★      ★

It is difficult to think of two men whose careers have been so closely contemporaneous and whose characters are so different as Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Midleton, for so long a Minister as St. John Brodrick : the latter's is an autobiography and is complete—*Records and Reactions 1856-1939* (Murray, 12s. 6d. n.) cover the author's whole life to date and an astonishingly full one it has been. If it has not the brilliance of Mr. Lloyd George's, it has at any rate more solidarity ; and, set down in retrospect, it shows not only the power of industry and application which might have been expected but also a vivacity and humour which were less to be looked for. The result is a book which is of great interest and a continual sidelight upon the political history of our times.

★      ★      ★

Seldom is it that any book is mentioned in these columns to which wide attention has already been drawn. It was a gratification to me when recently a man of public distinction told me that he found special interest in the books here dealt with because, for one reason or another, they had otherwise escaped his attention. But I cannot forbear, praised as it has been, to praise *Fray Mario*, by Helen Douglas Irvine (Longmans, 6s. n.). The jacket advertises its kinship with *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, and quite justly: this is of the same calibre and country. But to my thinking it is better than its distinguished prototype: it is altogether simpler, better at concealing its art, and touched with more beauty: it is, in brief, a most moving and delicate piece of work, and I am truly grateful for the duty laid upon me of reading it: for once duty was undiluted pleasure.

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In these days Mexico has to take a back seat as far as news is concerned, but it is a country of continual interest nevertheless. If any dispute that let him look at either of the two new books concerning it, *Mexican Mosaic*, by Rodney Gallop (Faber, 15s. n.), who needs no introduction to readers of CORNHILL, or *An Eye Witness of Mexico*, by R. H. K. Marett (Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d. n.): he will hardly recognise that both deal with the same country. Mr. Gallop, aided not only by his own extremely beautiful photographs but also by his wife's clever drawings, deals with the mystery and charm of the old land, Mr. Marett is in the main the news-chronicler of the troubles of to-day. There is, however, scope for both—it is a question of taste which the reader prefers: at least both are authentic and authoritative.

G.

## THE 'CORNHILL' COMPETITION.

## DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 187.

PRIZES of books to the value of £1, from John Murray's catalogue, are offered to the two solvers whose letters are first opened. Answers, containing the coupon from page iv, must be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, 50 Albemarle Street, W.1, and must reach him by 31st May.

Trust thou thy Love : if she be ———, is she not ——— ?

1. But each upbore a stately tent  
Where cedar ——— in scented row  
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
2. 'Ha ! ha !' quoth he, 'full plain I see  
The Devil knows how to ———.'
3. Where I made ——— — turn down an empty Glass !
4. Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart !  
——— our uses and our destinies.
5. All treasure's uncertain,  
Then down with your ——— !  
In frolics dispose your pounds, shillings, and pence,

Answer to Acrostic 185, March number : 'Thanks to the *human heart* by which we live' (Wordsworth : 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality'). 1. *HeatH* (Shelley : 'Remorse'). 2. *UsE* (Emerson : 'Uriel'). 3. *MarciA* (Chaucer : 'Balade'). 4. *AppeaR* (Milton : 'L'Allegro'). 5. *NighT* (Thomas Hood : 'Autumn').

The first correct answers opened were sent by 'Square,' Brant Cottage, Osmington Mills, Weymouth, and Mr. F. Hamlyn Price, 7 Harley Gardens, The Boltons, S.W.10, who are invited to choose books as mentioned above. N.B.—*Sources need not be given.*



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